

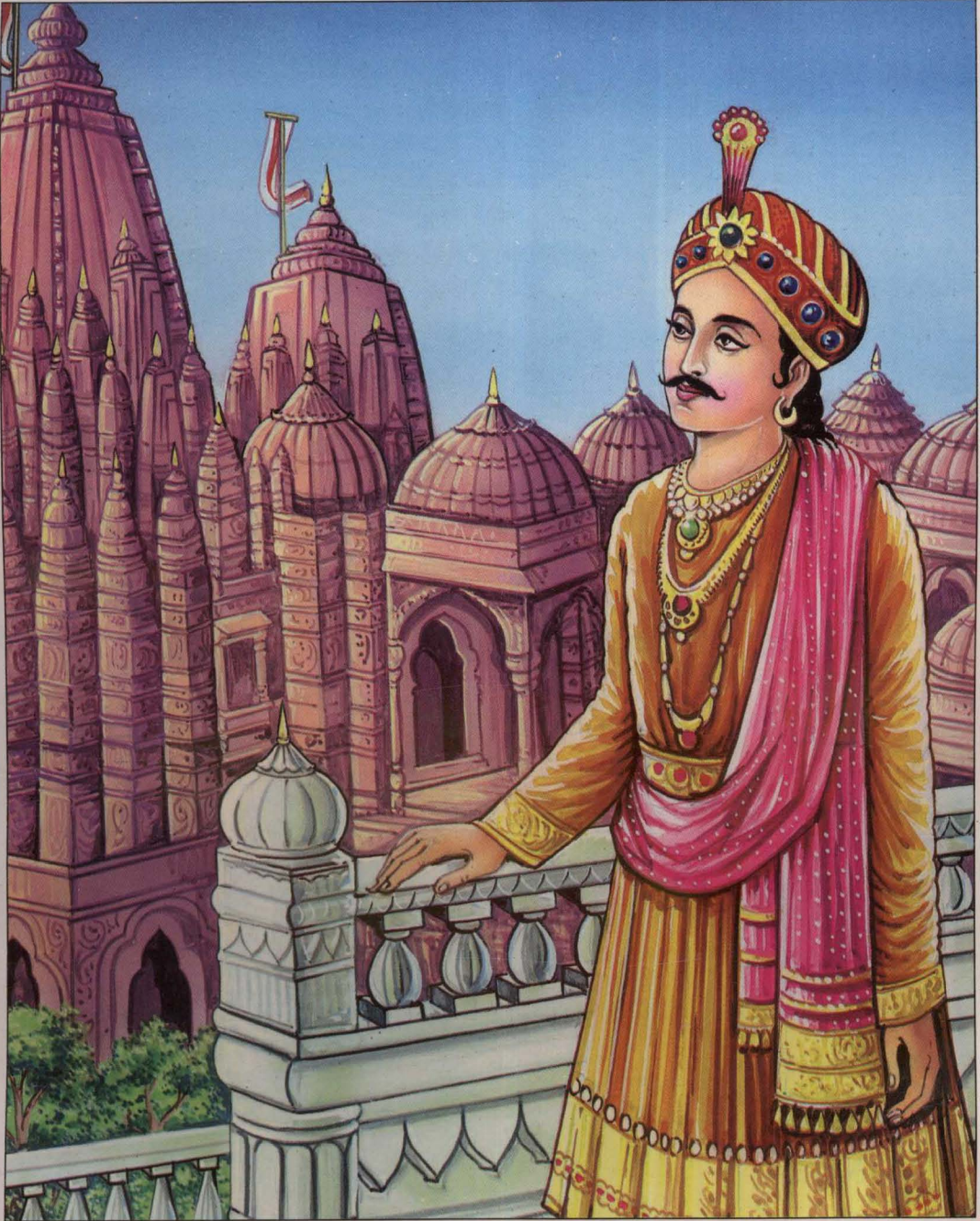


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# EMPEROR SAMPRAATI





# EMPEROR SAMPRATI

The names of Emperor Ashoka and his grandson Emperor Samprati occupy very important places in Indian history. Samprati enjoys almost the same eminence in Jain history that Ashoka enjoys in Buddhist history. Even after thousands of years, the exemplary contribution of Emperor Samprati towards spread of Jain religion and culture, in and outside India, still remains a bright and inspiring chapter in Indian history.

The incident of Ashoka's son Kunal getting blind finds mention at numerous places in ancient Jain scriptures including Churni (seventh century Vikram), Bhashya, and Tika. Also included along with are stories about past births of Samprati as well as his sending accomplished Shravaks to foreign lands for spreading Jain religion far and wide. As such, there cannot even be a shred of doubt about his historicity. However, it is surprising that except for a passing mention, Indian historians have conspicuously ignored this illustrious, valourous and religious emperor. Why?

This biographical sketch of Emperor Samprati's life projects various human virtues like Kunal's deep devotion for his father; the ideal compassion of Acharya Suhasti; Samprati's devotion for religion, Jina, and guru; his important deeds of benevolence and, of course, his valour and diplomatic acumen. The narrative presents the ideal character and life of Samprati in an inspiring manner.

The story is based on the popular book titled 'Samrat Samprati' by Pandit Kashinath Jain. This book mentions numerous historical evidences.

This picture-story version has been written by Acharya Shri Vijaya Jinottam Suri, the successor of Acharya Shri Vijaya Sushil Surishvar ji.

—*Shrichand Surana 'Saras'*

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## EMPEROR SAMPRATI

Patliputra today celebrates the victory of Emperor Ashoka. In a large hall the emperor sits on a high throne. On two sides sit his ministers, state-priest, commander-in-chief, other dignitaries and thousands of citizens. A messenger enters with a letter in a golden tray —

From Avanti prince  
Kunal sends his  
homage to his  
father.

I will also write  
my blessings to the  
prince in a letter.

The Emperor instructed his secretary to write a letter and retired to his palace.

After sometime the secretary brought the letter. The Emperor read it and added a line—

Adhiyatam  
Kumarah  
(educate the  
prince).

Then he put his seal on the letter.

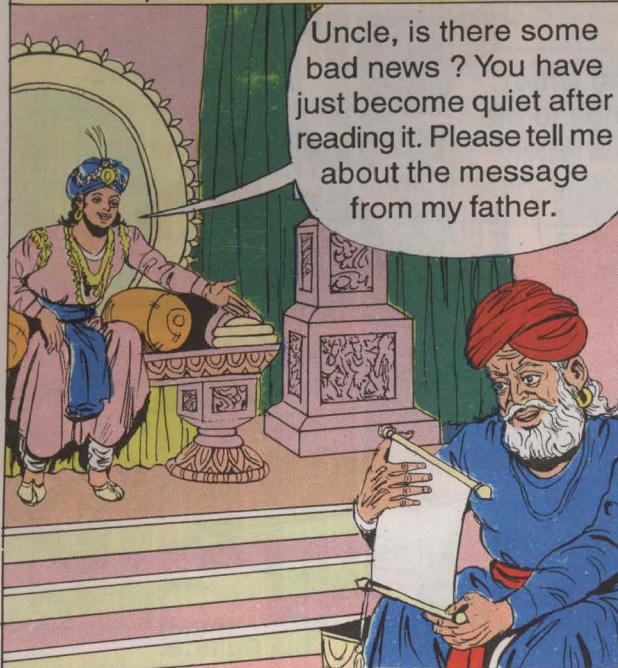
It was meal-time. Leaving the letter the emperor left for the dining room. Queen Tishyarakshita looked around and found herself alone. She took a needle and with the collyrium from her eyelids put a black dot on the emperor's message.\*

She put the letter back and went to the dining room.

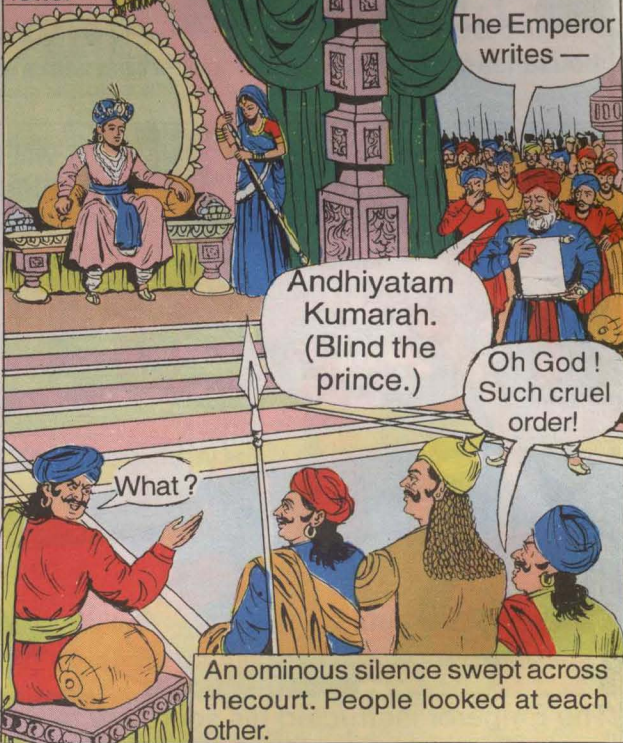
\* Kunal was the son of Emperor Ashoka's deceased senior queen. On her death-bed, the emperor had promised her that Kunal will be his successor. Tishyarakshita and other queens wanted to kill Kunal. Aware of this, the emperor shifted Kunal, away from Patliputra, to Avanti for security reasons.



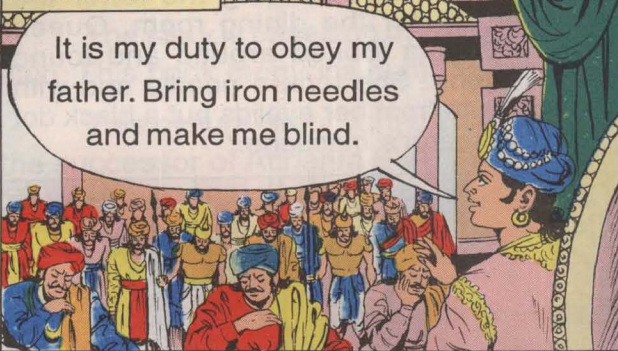
After sometime the emperor sent his letter with the messenger. When at Avanti the minister read the letter he was taken aback. Kunal inquired —



The minister composed himself and read the letter —



Kunal said —



Kunal took hot iron needles in his hands and pierced his own eyes.



It became the talk of the town —



# Queen Tishyarakshita had changed 'Adhiyatam' Kumarah to 'Andhiyatam Kumarah'.



A few days later a messenger came to Emperor Ashoka with the news —

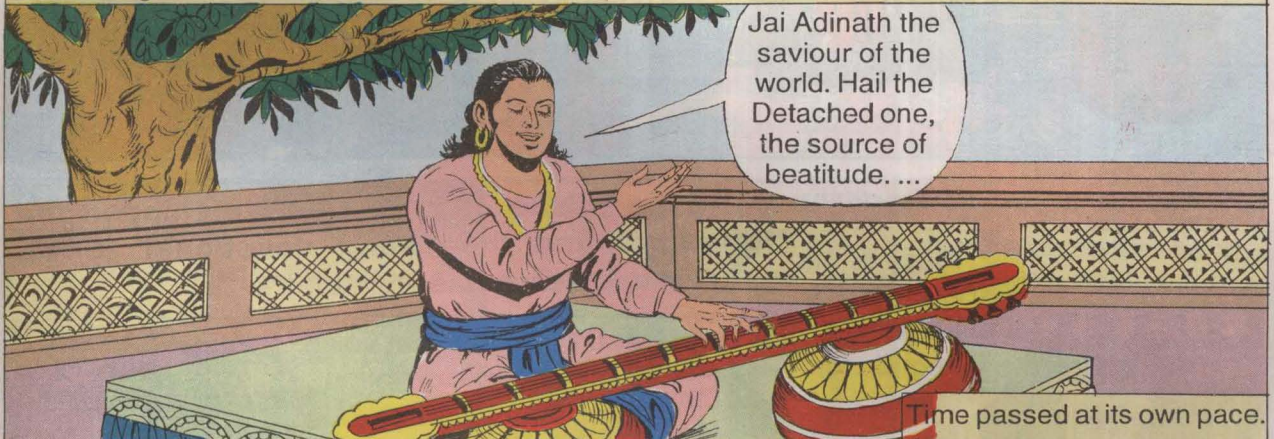


The Emperor was shocked when the messenger showed him the letter —

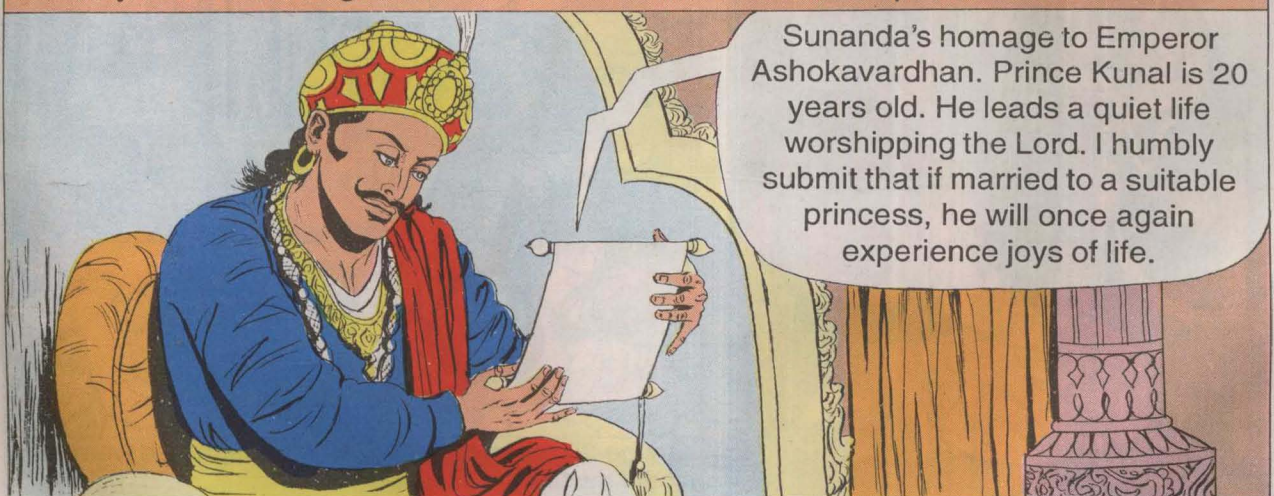


Emperor Ashoka was overwhelmed with sorrow.

In Avanti blind Kunal grew up under loving care of governess Sunanda. In the isolation imposed by blindness he made Taanpura<sup>#</sup> his companion. When alone he would play Taanpura and sing devotional songs.



One day Sunanda, the governess of Kunal, sent a letter to Emperor Ashoka —



# A Sitar-like musical instrument.



After reading the letter, the emperor issued an order and sent it to Avanti. The minister read the order —

A small kingdom is given to prince Kunal. Find a suitable match and arrange for his marriage.

Following the order, prince Kunal was made the ruler of a small kingdom.

And he was married to Sharatshri, the daughter of a ruler of a small kingdom.

One day Kunal said to Sharatshri —

Today is the Ashadh Purnima #  
Let us go to a Jina temple for worship.

The prince and his wife worshipped the Lord and then sang devotional songs. The audience was enthralled —

Great! What a sweet voice.  
Commendable devotion.

Without the worship  
of the Lord life is  
worthless.

On the full moon night the temple resonated with devotional music.

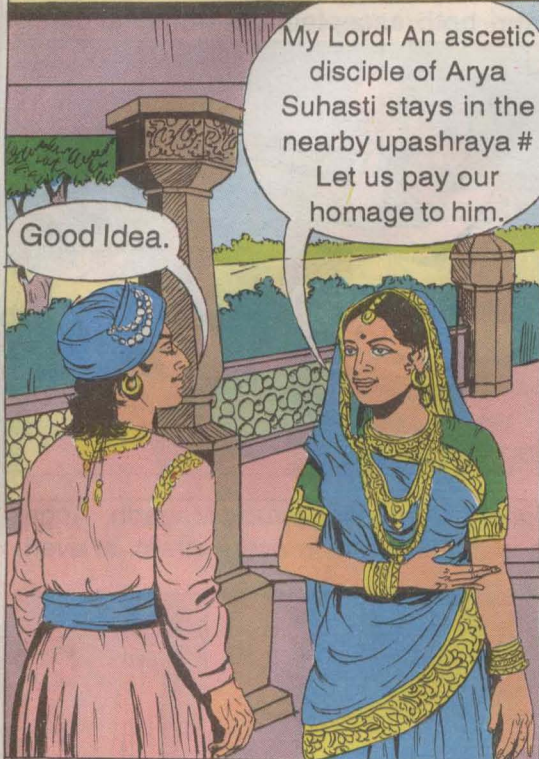
# full moon night of the month of Ashadh.



Next morning Sharatshri asked Kunal —

My Lord! An ascetic disciple of Arya Suhasti stays in the nearby upashraya #  
Let us pay our homage to him.

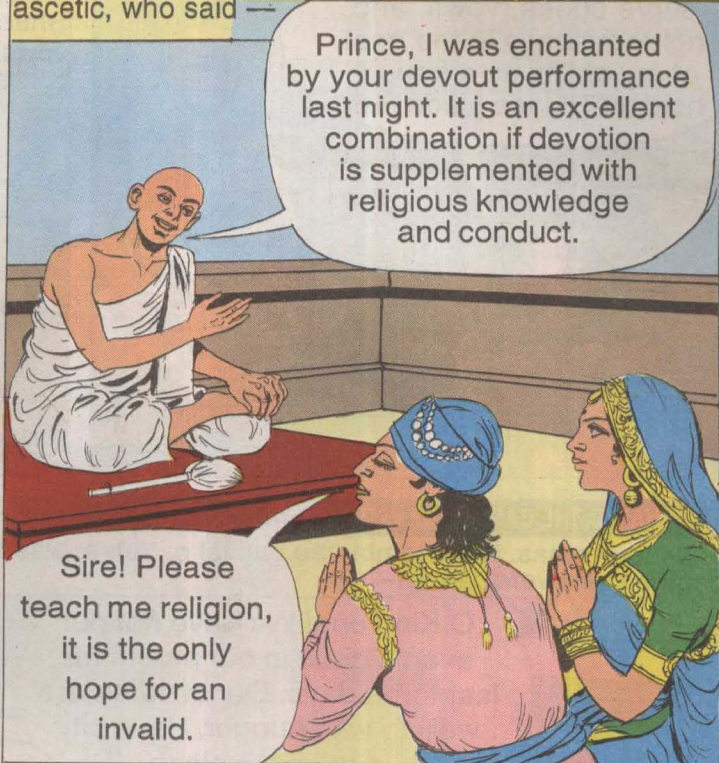
Good Idea.



The prince and his family went to pay homage to the ascetic, who said —

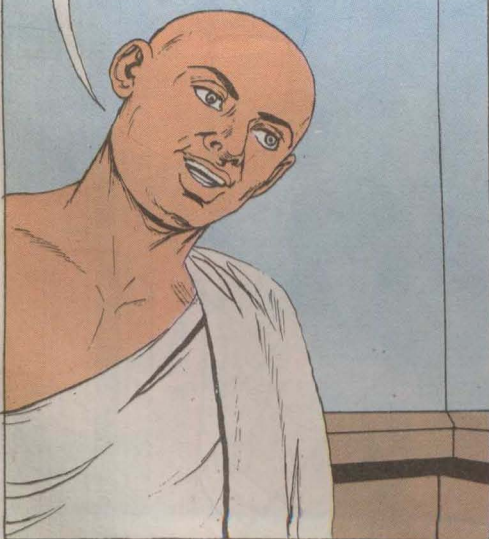
Prince, I was enchanted by your devout performance last night. It is an excellent combination if devotion is supplemented with religious knowledge and conduct.

Sire! Please teach me religion, it is the only hope for an invalid.



The ascetic said —

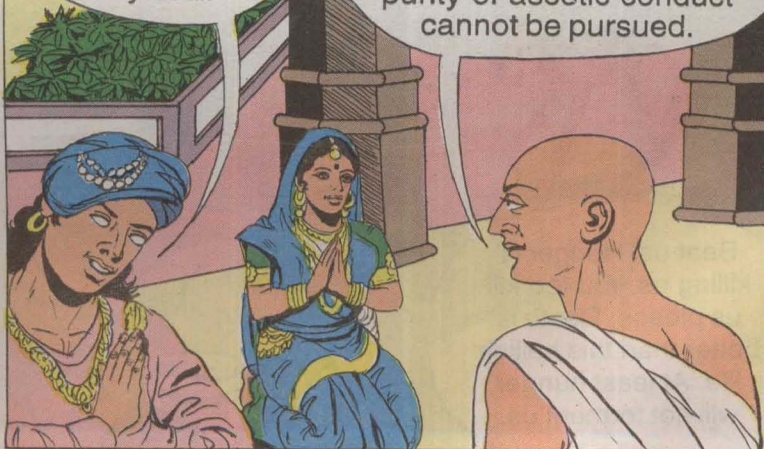
Come and listen to the words of the Omniscient in my discourse.  
You will have peace in life.



Now the prince went to the discourse daily with his family. The words of the Omniscient made him happy. One day the prince requested the ascetic —

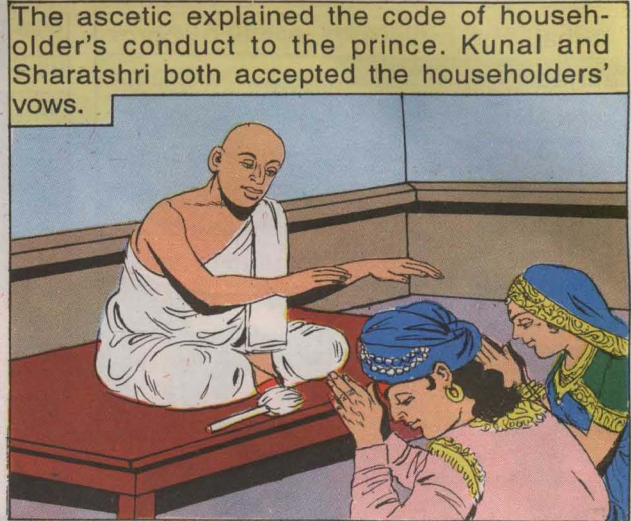
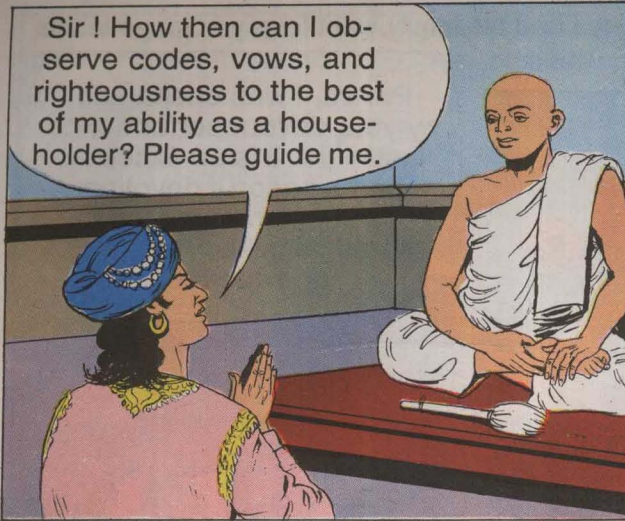
Sir! Your preaching has made me detached from the world. I want to embrace ascetic discipline for the upliftment of my soul.

Prince, you can follow religious conduct only as a householder. Your blindness disables you to observe compassion to beings and without that purity of ascetic conduct cannot be pursued.

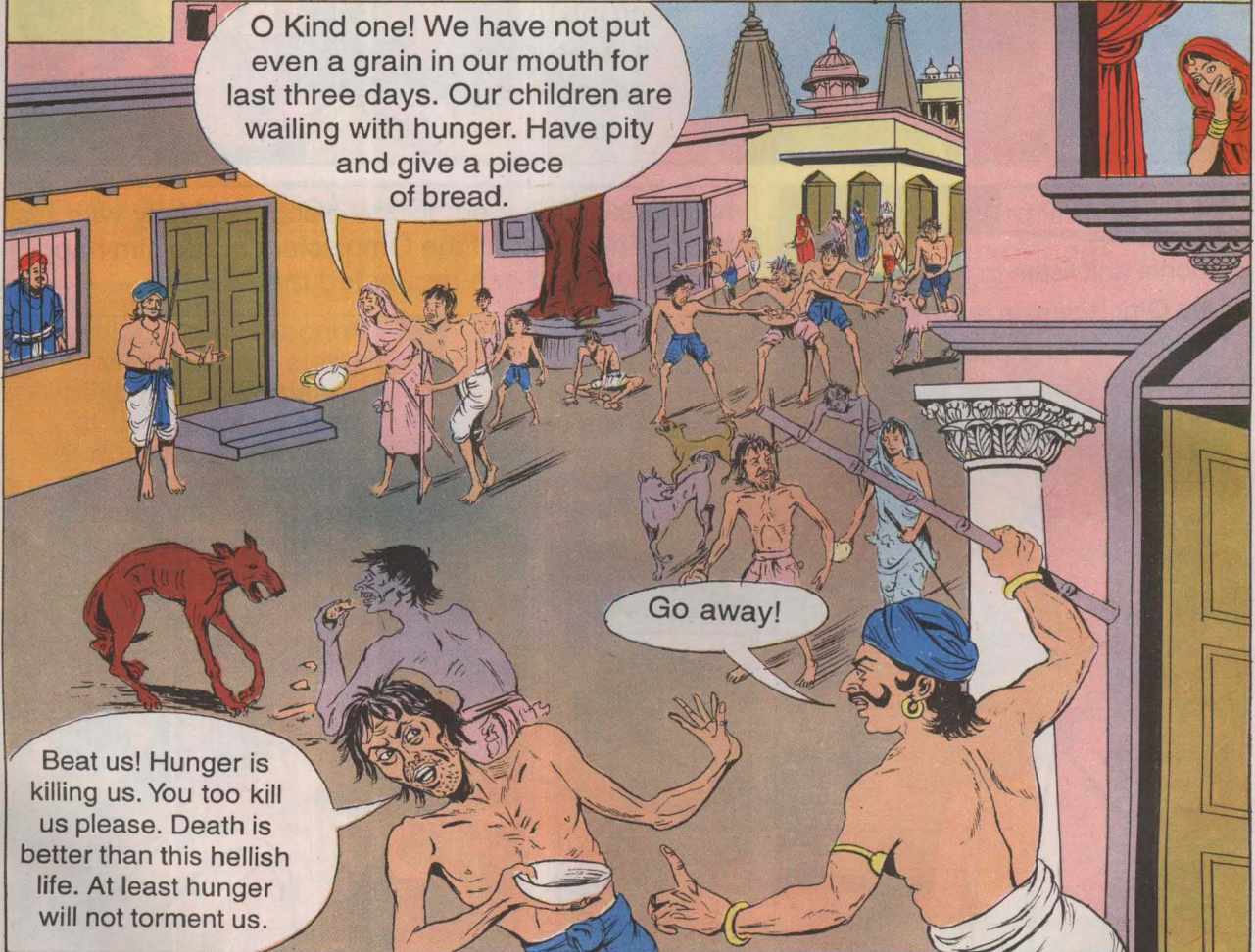


# ascetic-hostel.



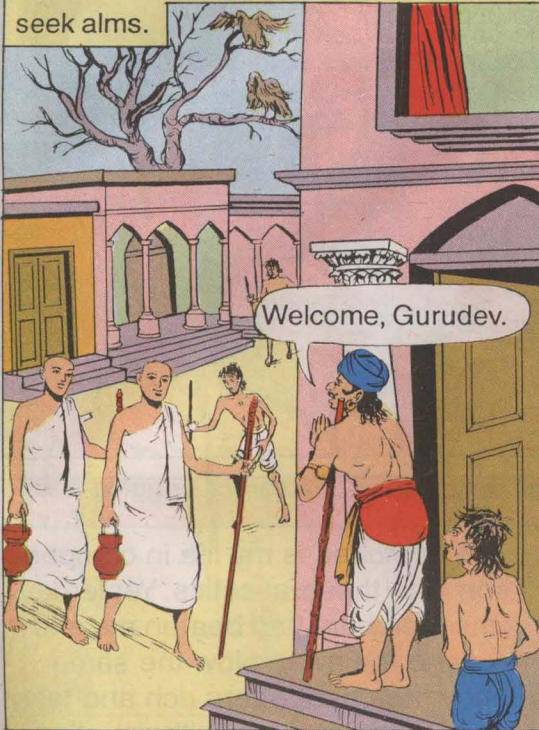


**KAUSHAMBI, THE CAPITAL OF VATSA** During that period the calamity of draught struck Magadh, Anga, and other areas. Kaushambi, the capital of Vatsa, was the worst effected. In every street, at every doorbeggars were calling—

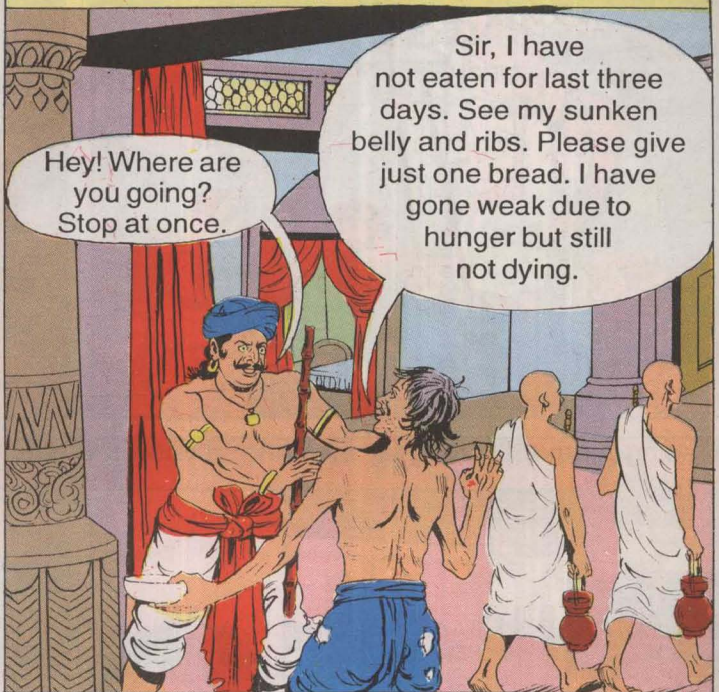




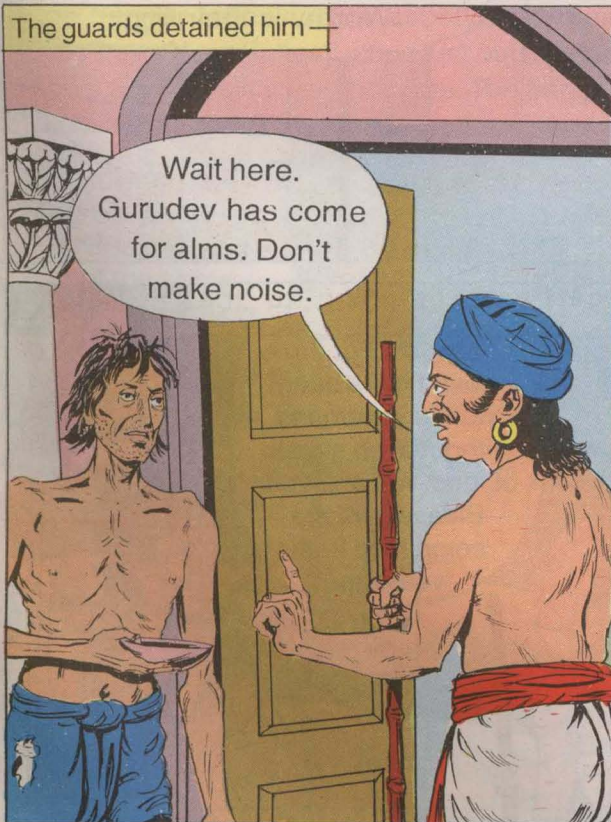
At that time two young ascetics approached merchant Dhanpal's house to seek alms.



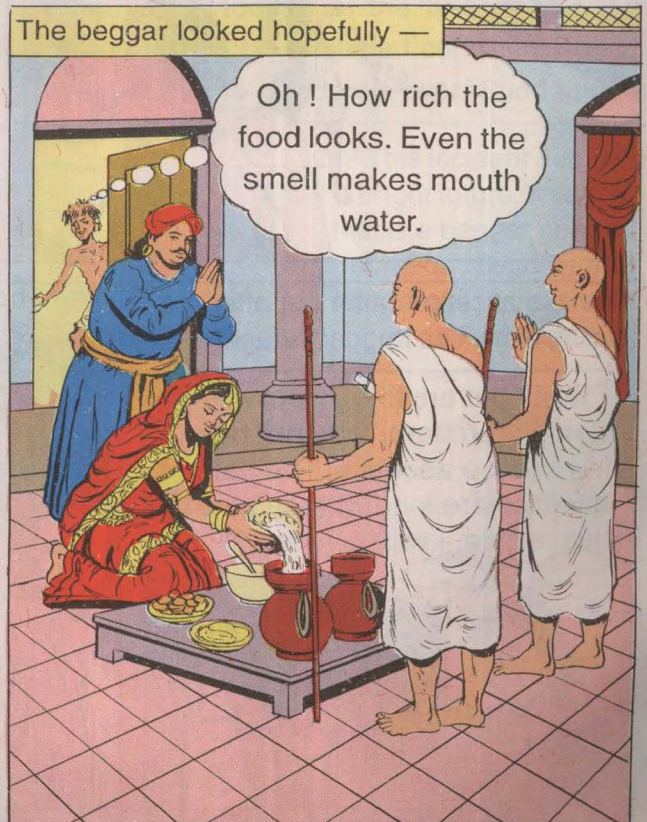
Seeing the Shramans (ascetics), the gatekeeper left the gate open. With the Shramans a beggar also stealthily entered the house. The guards checked him —



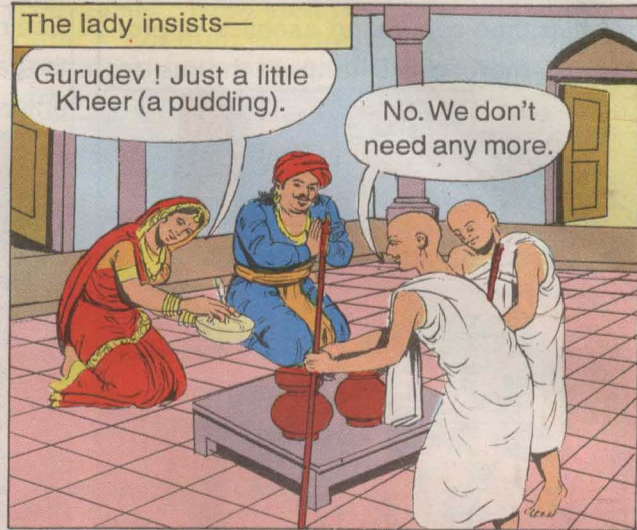
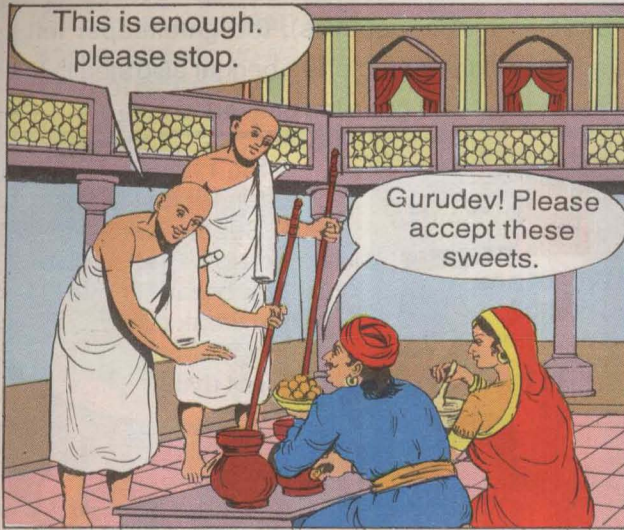
The guards detained him —



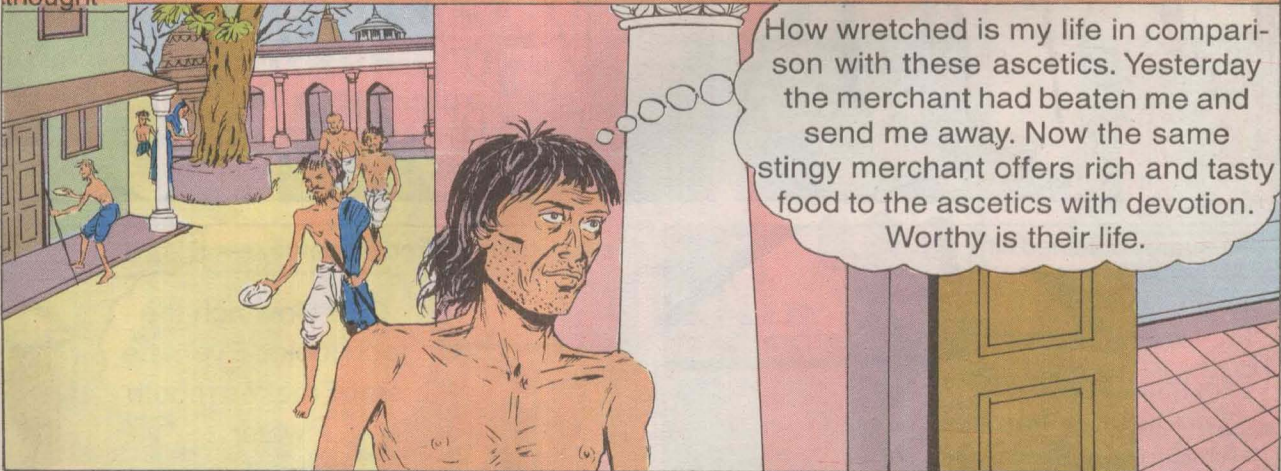
The beggar looked hopefully —





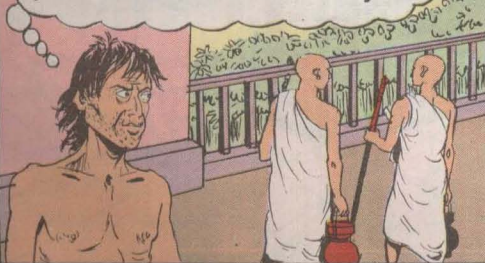


Seeing all this the beggar standing outside the gate was astonished. He forgot begging and thought—



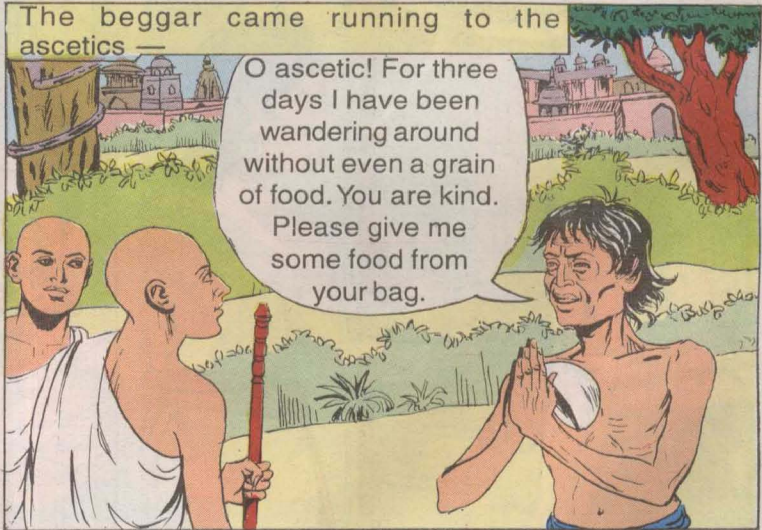
The two ascetics came out after collecting alms. The beggar thought —

I won't get anything from this stingy merchant, why not beg from these ascetics. The Jain ascetics are kind. If they give just a little, I will have my fill.



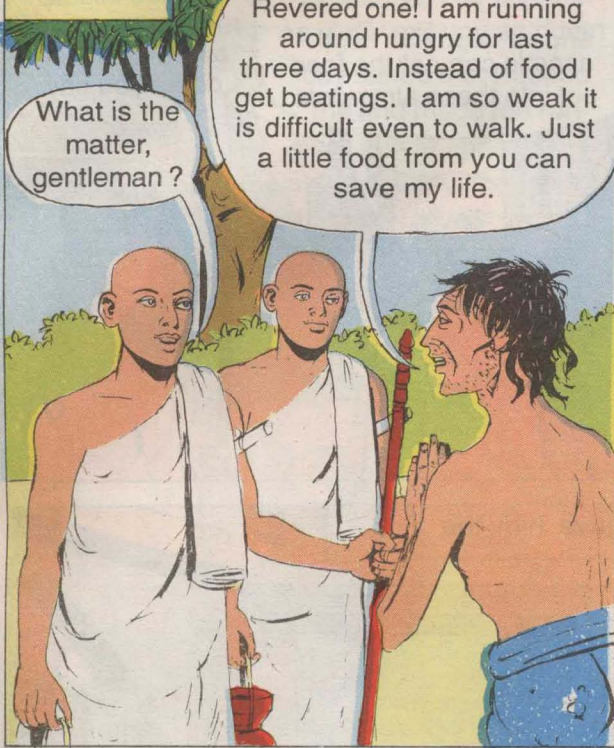
The beggar came running to the ascetics —

O ascetic! For three days I have been wandering around without even a grain of food. You are kind. Please give me some food from your bag.

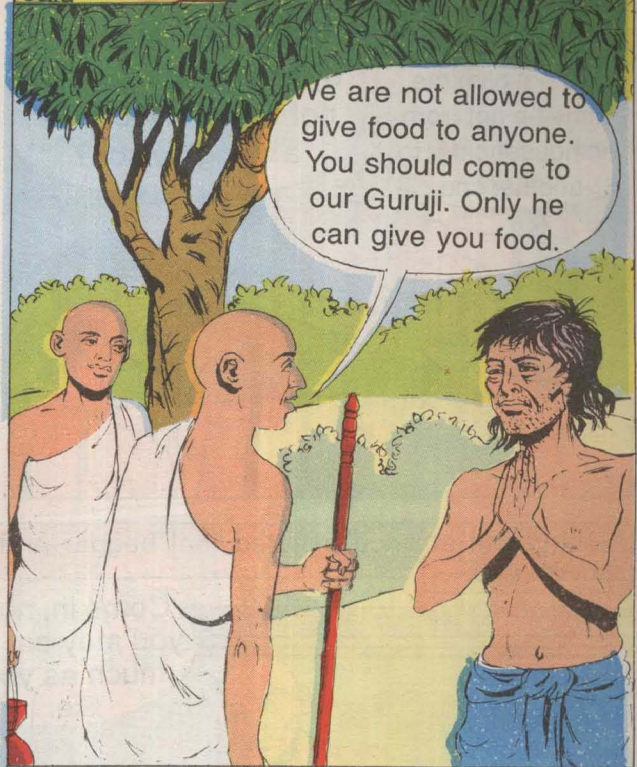




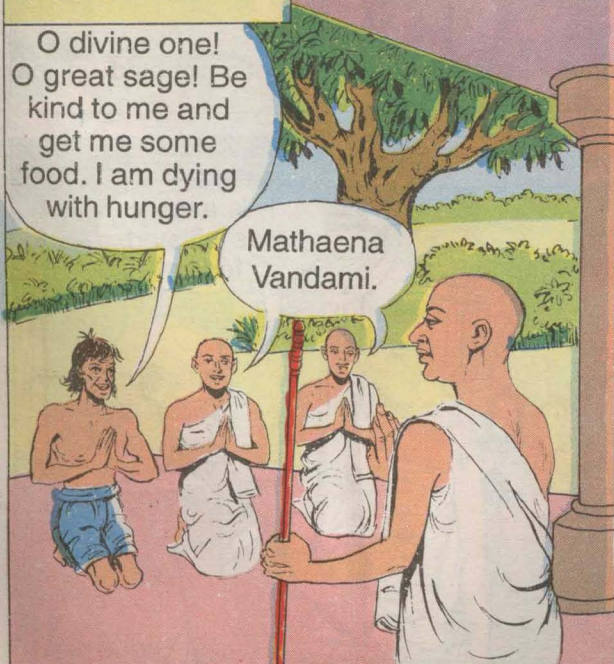
The pathetic words stopped the ascetics in their tracks —



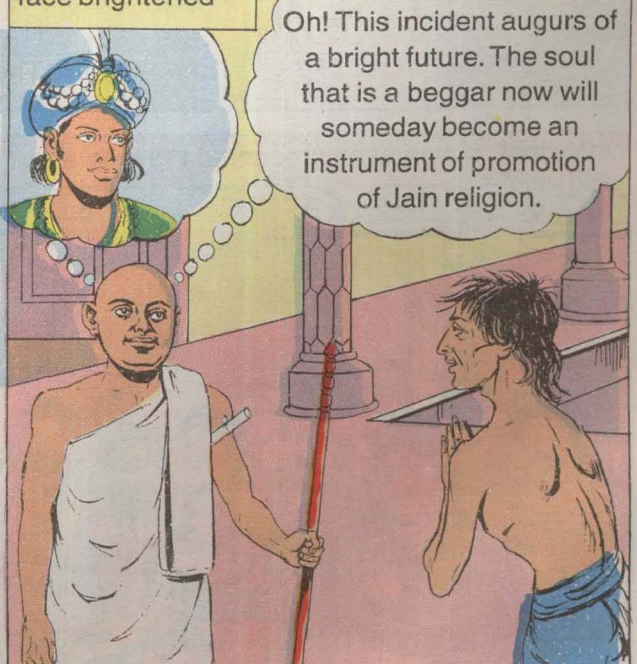
The ascetics said —



The beggar followed the ascetics to their upashraya. Arya Suhasti stood just outside the hostel. The ascetics paid homage. The beggar stretched his hands —

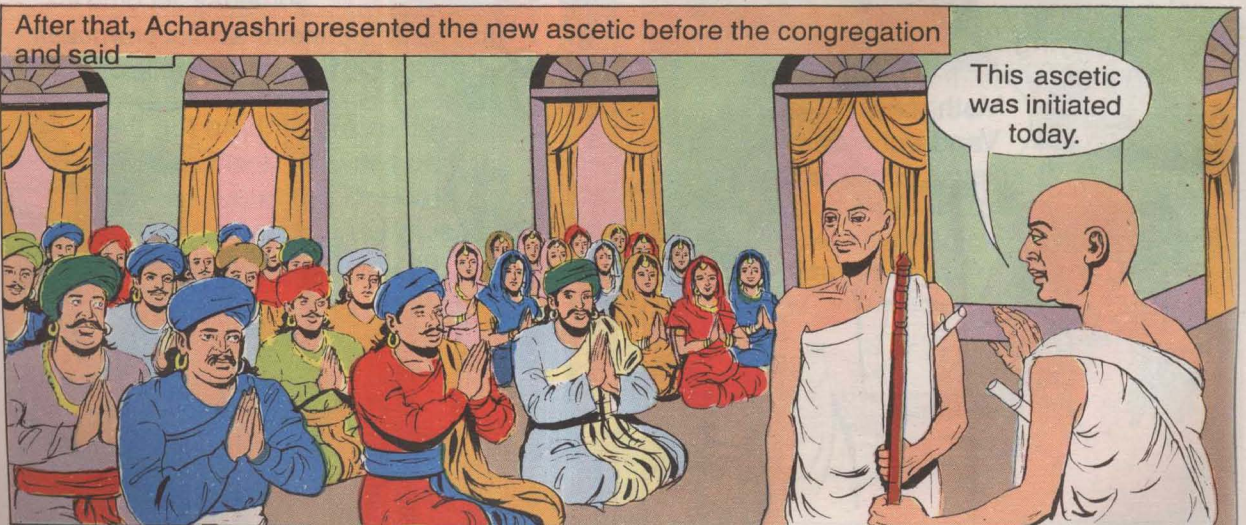
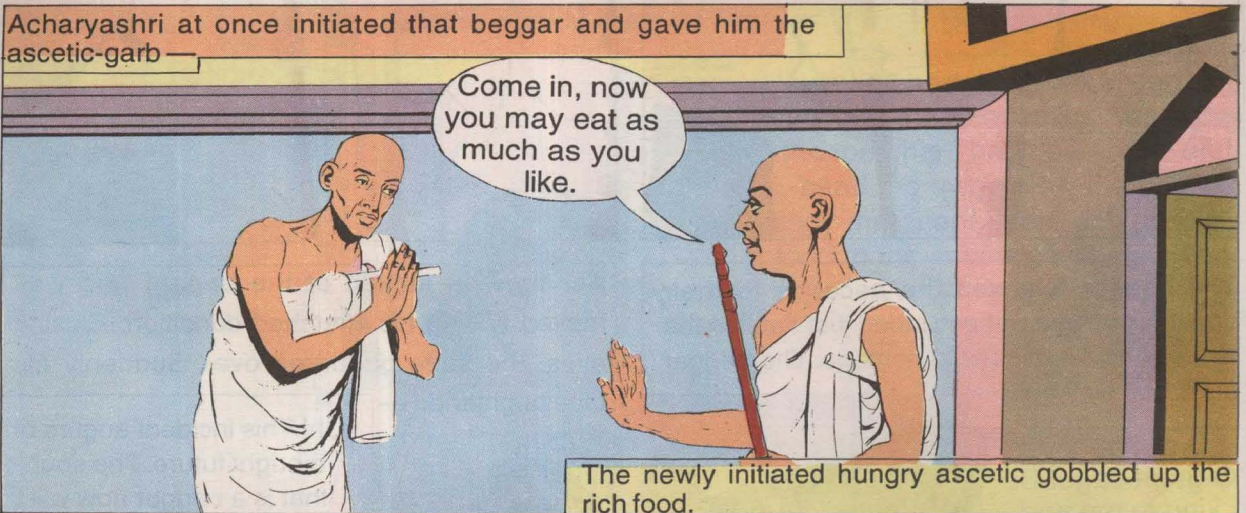
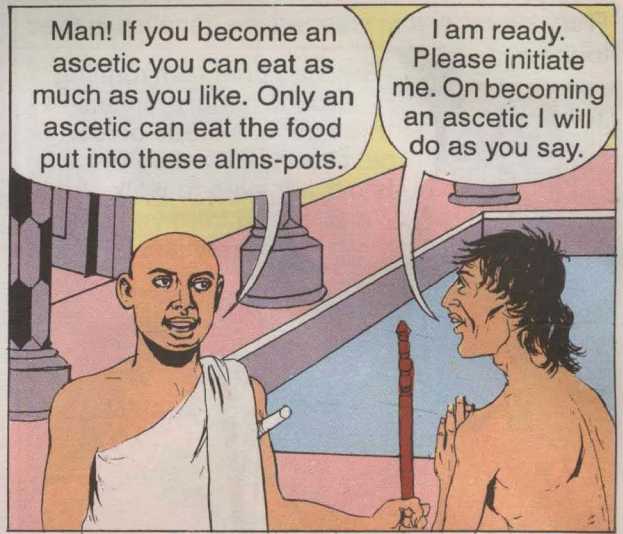
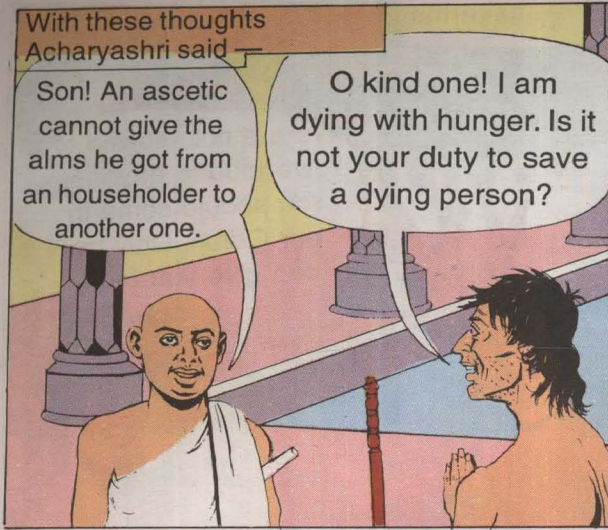


Acharyashri looked at the beggar and was moved seeing his wretched condition. Closing eyes, the sage pondered over. Suddenly his face brightened —

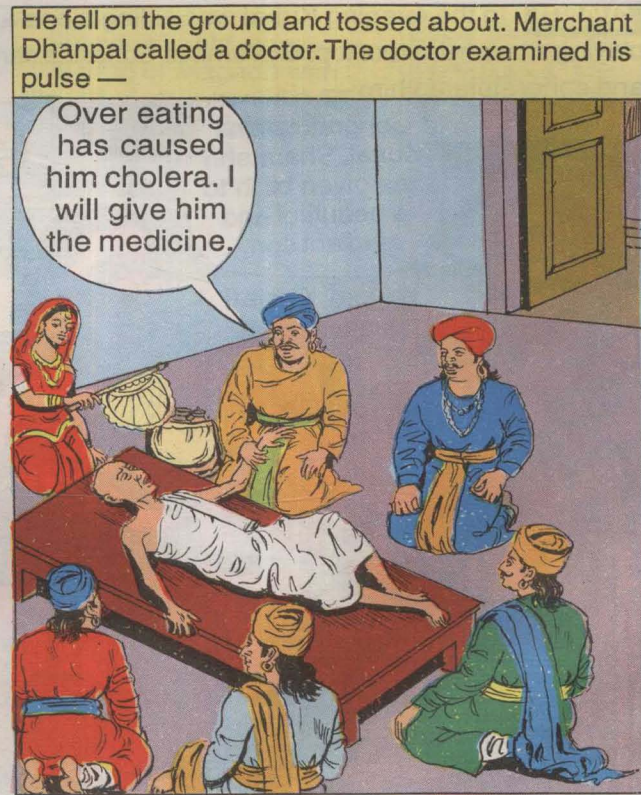
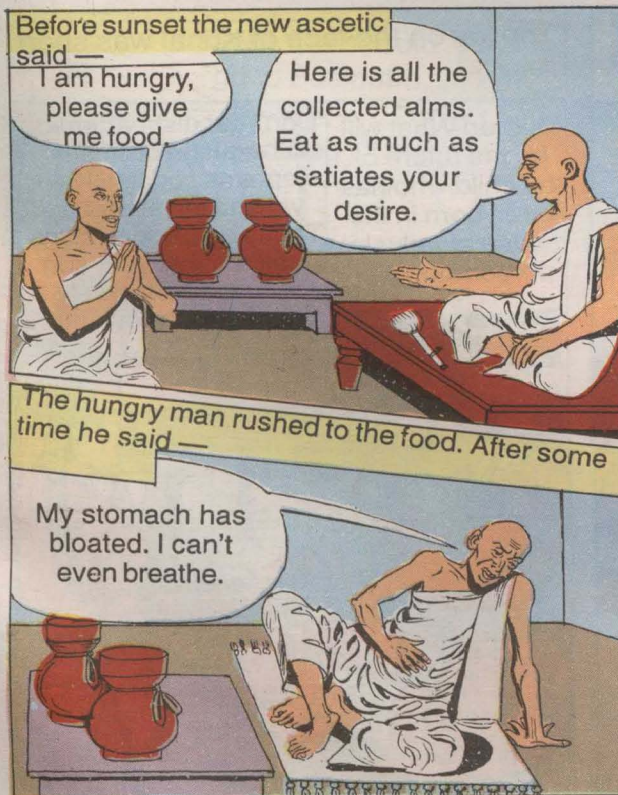
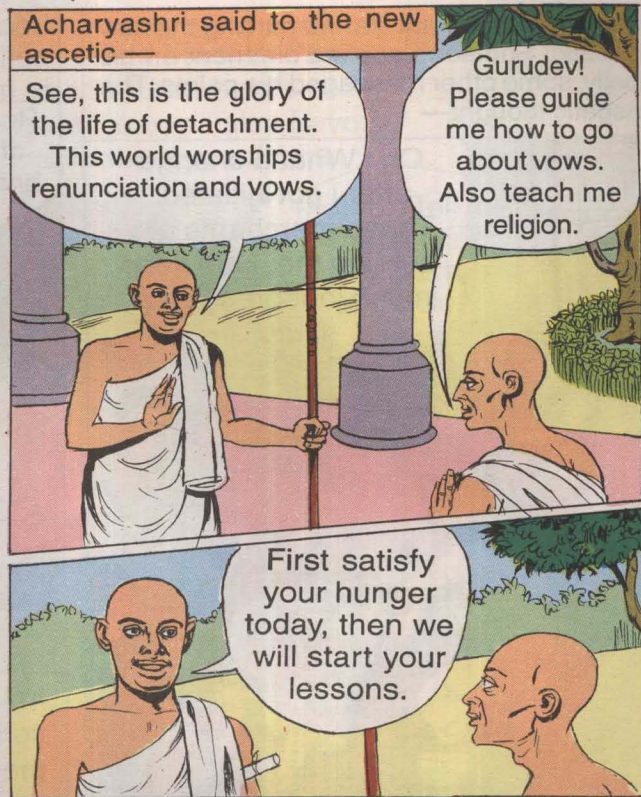
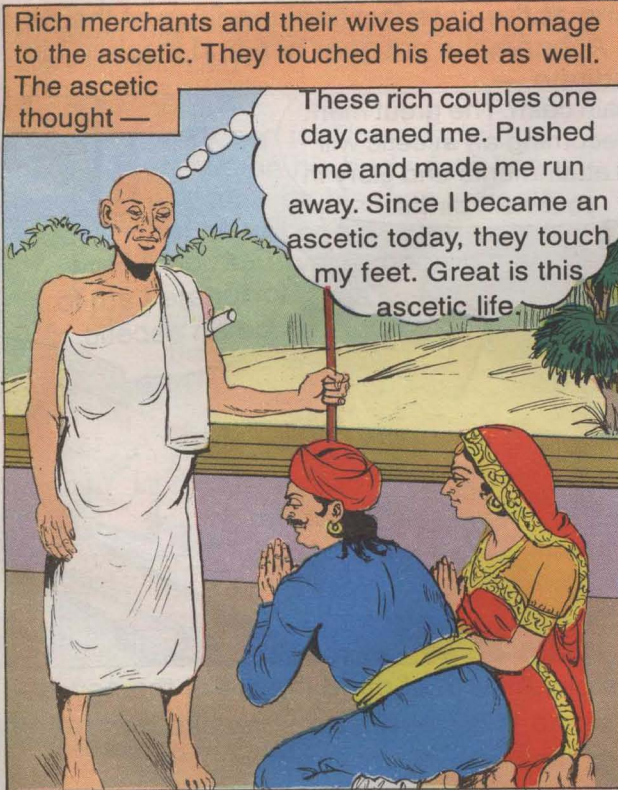


# These Shramans were disciples of Arya Suhasti who was a Dashapurvadar Acharya, having knowledge of ten subtle canons. The successor of Arya Sthulabhadra was Dashapurvadar Acharya Mahagiri. Suhasti and Mahagiri both were disciples of Arya Sthulabhadra.



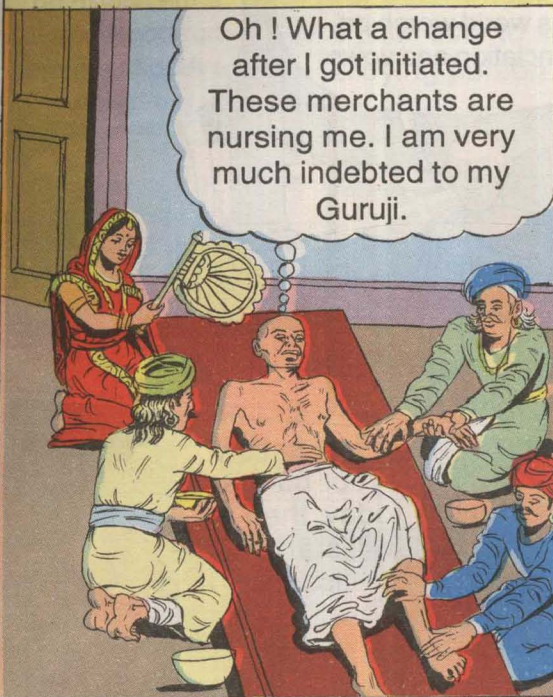








Many rich merchant started nursing the new ascetic. Someone applied ointment on his belly, some other massaged his palms. The ascetic thought—



Looking at the deteriorating condition of the ascetic, Acharyashri sat near him and inspired him to meditate —

Remain calm. The great merit of becoming an ascetic will bring attainments and glory in your next births.



In this pious state of mind the life of the new ascetic came to an end. The shravaks performed the last rites with due reverence.

**AVANTI** In the evening Kunal was sitting alone and playing sitar on the roof top. Governess Sunanda came and congratulated him —



The joy on the face of Kunal was short lived —

Mother! What will be the future of the child who has been born in the house of unlucky person like me?

Don't get disheartened. Sharatshri has seen elephant, lion and Kalp-vriksha in her dream. These auspicious signs indicate that your son is indeed extremely fortunate. Believe me.

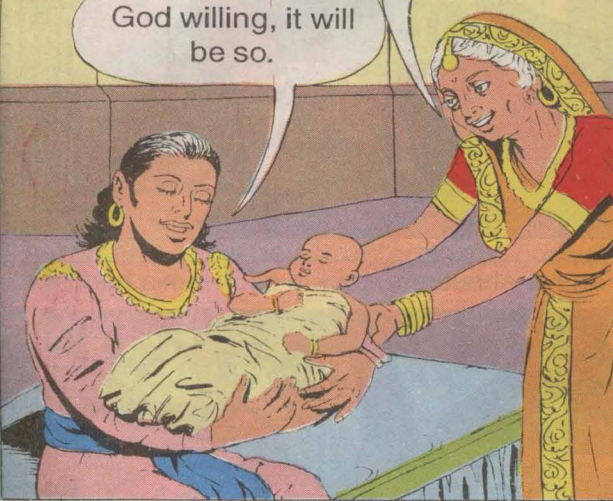




After twelve days Sunanda put the infant in Kunal's lap and said —

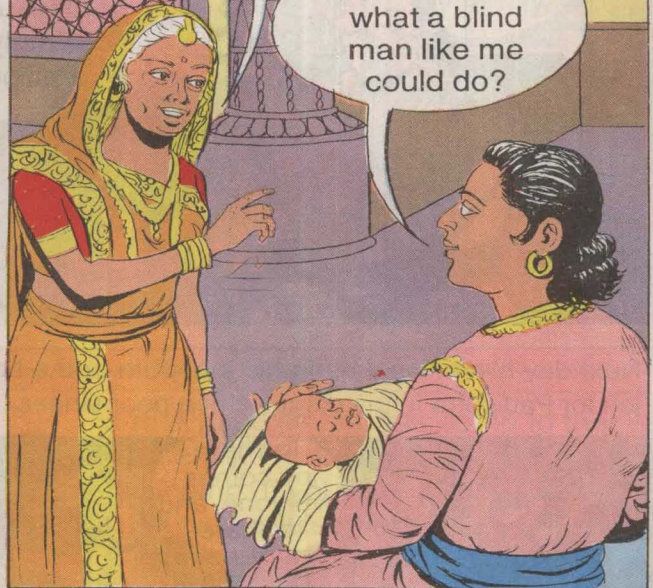
Son! How beautiful and lovely your son is. The auspicious marks on his body, fate-line, and aura on his face indicate that he will one day be a great Mauryan emperor.

God willing, it will be so.



Son! God blesses those whose endeavours are good. You will also have to make some efforts.

Mother! Tell me what a blind man like me could do?



Son! You should go to Patliputra.

Should I go and beg from my father?



Kunal uttered in disappointment.

No, you should please the King of Magadh with the art of your music. And then seek a kingdom for your son.



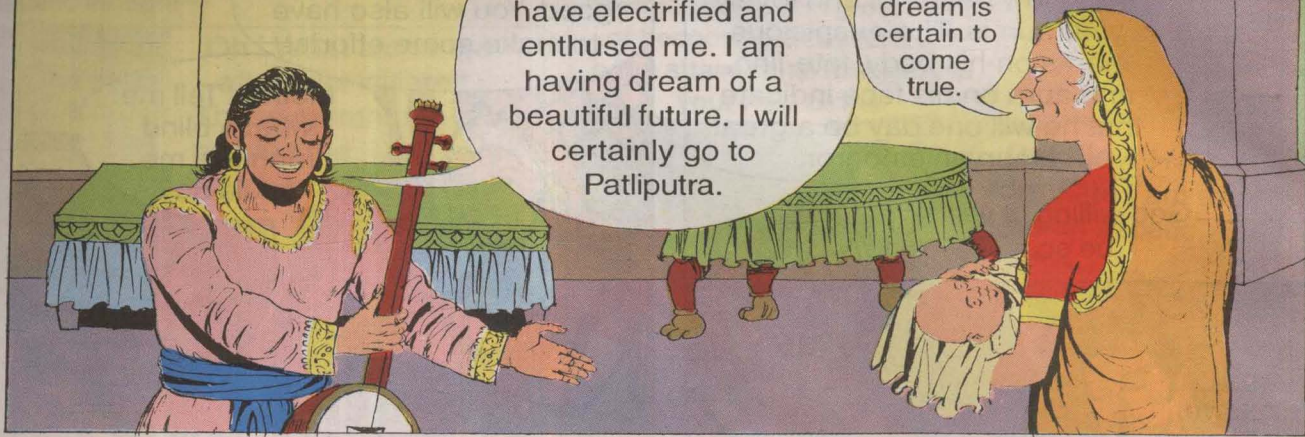
The governess advised.



Kunal's face brightened at these words of Sunanda. He took his taanpura and stood up —

Mother ! Your words have electrified and enthused me. I am having dream of a beautiful future. I will certainly go to Patliputra.

Son!. Your dream is certain to come true.



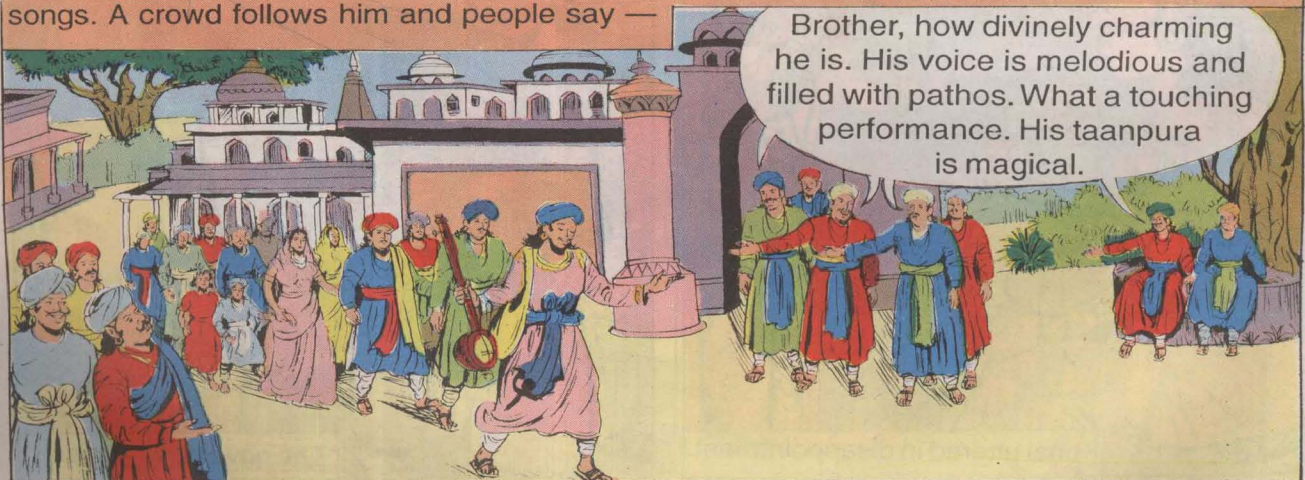
Next day blind Kunal hung his taanpura and a bag on his shoulders, took a stick in his hand and left for Patliputra in the disguise of a poor singer.

To share joy comes everyone, and to share misery, none.

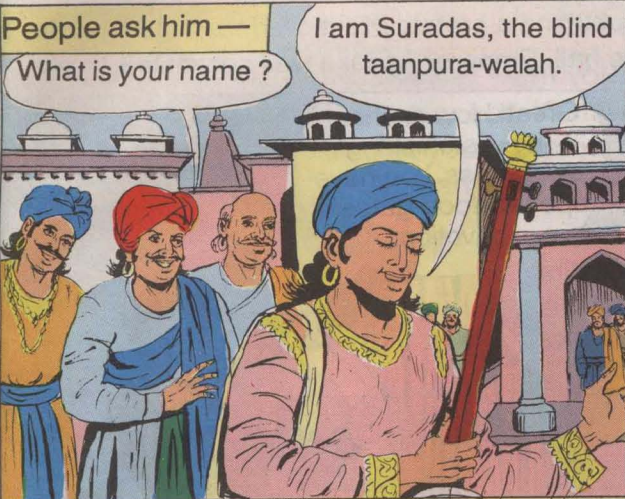


**PATLIPUTRA** A blind singer is roaming around on streets of Patliputra singing devotional songs. A crowd follows him and people say —

Brother, how divinely charming he is. His voice is melodious and filled with pathos. What a touching performance. His taanpura is magical.

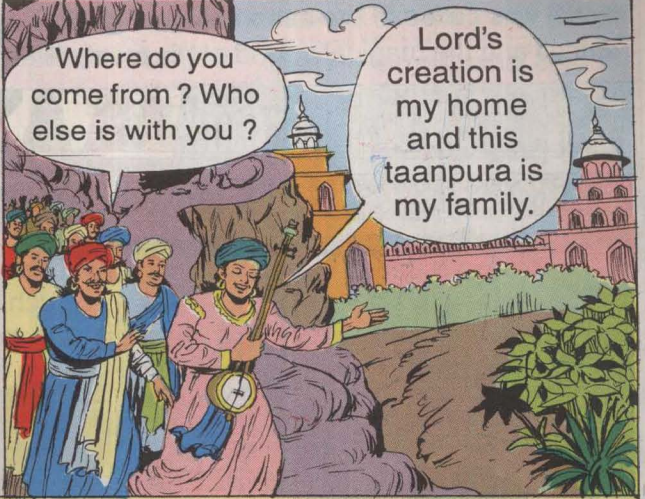






People ask him —  
What is your name ?

I am Suradas, the blind  
taanpura-walah.



Where do you  
come from ? Who  
else is with you ?

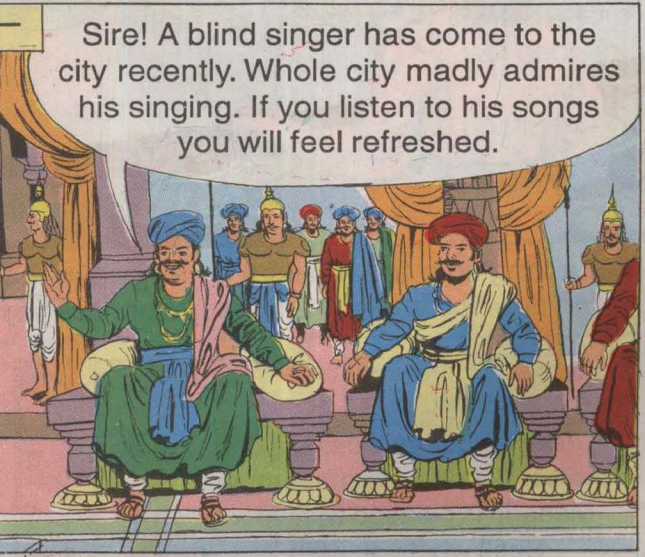
Lord's  
creation is  
my home  
and this  
taanpura is  
my family.

Answering questions and singing he would proceed further. On whichever crossing he stood and sang he attracted large crowds.

One day Emperor Ashoka said in his assembly —



Working since morning  
I am dead tired. Arrange  
for some music and  
dance.



Sire! A blind singer has come to the  
city recently. Whole city madly admires  
his singing. If you listen to his songs  
you will feel refreshed.

The Emperor ordered —



Call him. I will  
listen to only  
his music  
today.



Kunal was called to the assembly and given a seat behind a curtain. He moved his fingers on the strings and the magical sound of his music filled the hall. Emperor Ashoka was enchanted.



For a long time the musical notes continued to echo. The audience was enthralled. After some time the performance concluded. The hall reverberated with the sound of applause.

At the end of the applause the emperor said —

Suradas! Your music is beyond praise. Ashoka, the emperor of Magadh is pleased with you. Seek what you wish.

As you say, sire.

Suradas once again put his fingers on the strings and sang a verse —

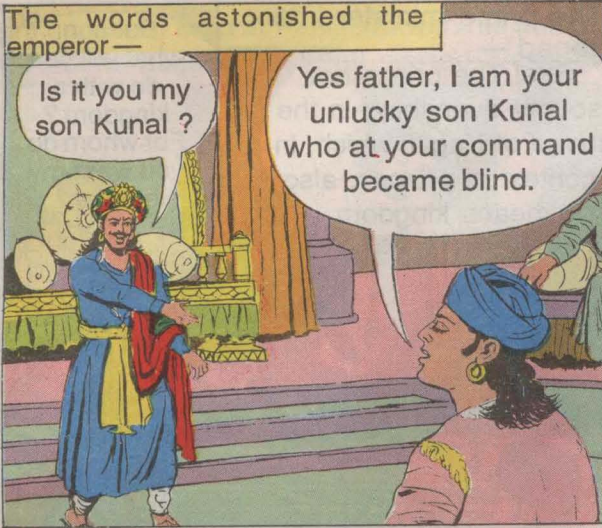
I am the great grandson of Chandragupta and the grandson of Bindusara. The invalid blind son of Ashoka seeks just a kagini (a coin of very small denomination).



The words astonished the emperor —

Is it you my son Kunal ?

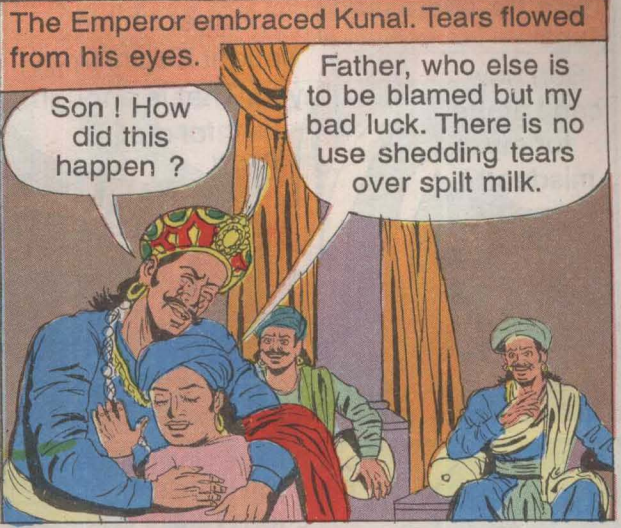
Yes father, I am your unlucky son Kunal who at your command became blind.



The Emperor embraced Kunal. Tears flowed from his eyes.

Son ! How did this happen ?

Father, who else is to be blamed but my bad luck. There is no use shedding tears over spilt milk.



The Emperor tried to recall the past. With a shock he recalled —

Come darling, it is time for lunch.

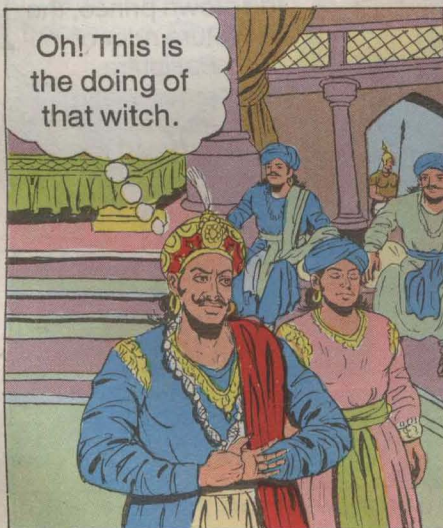
Please proceed my lord. I will soon join you.



Oh! This is the doing of that witch.

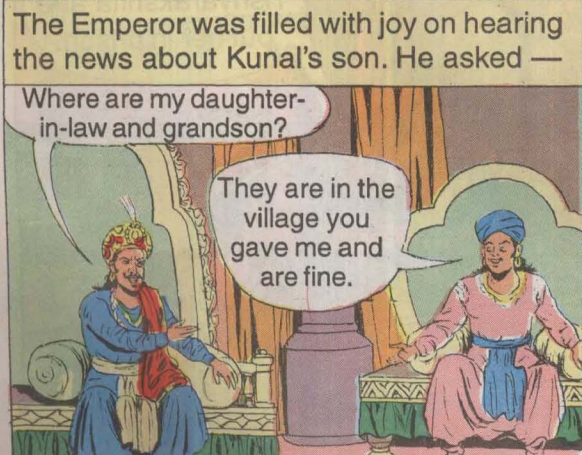
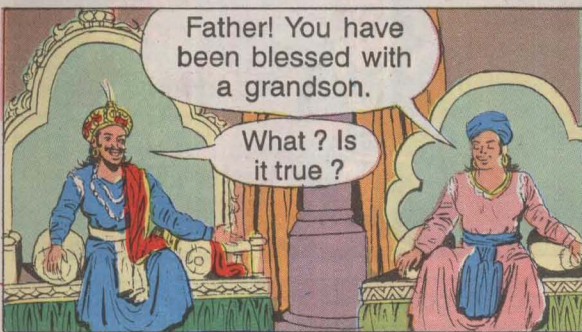
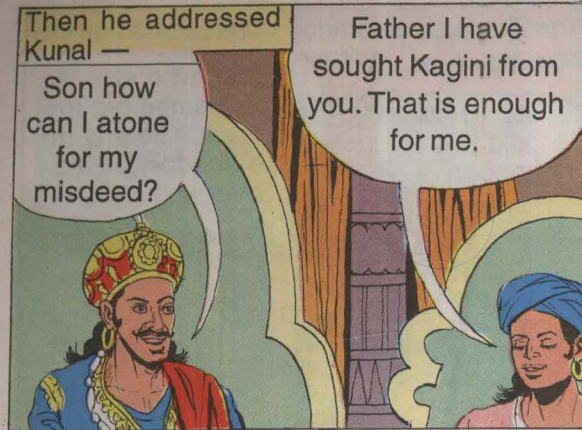
He at once called his guards —

Arrest queen Tishyarakshita and put her in prison.

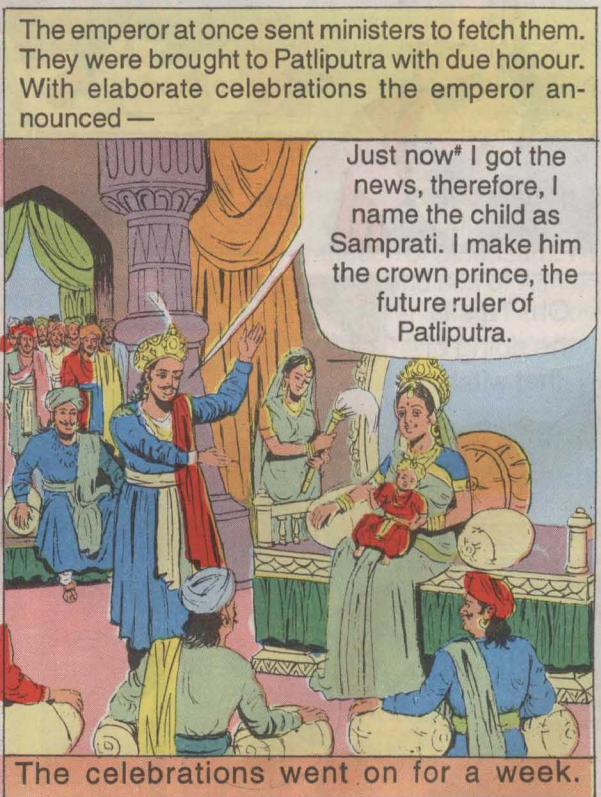




## Emperor Samprati.



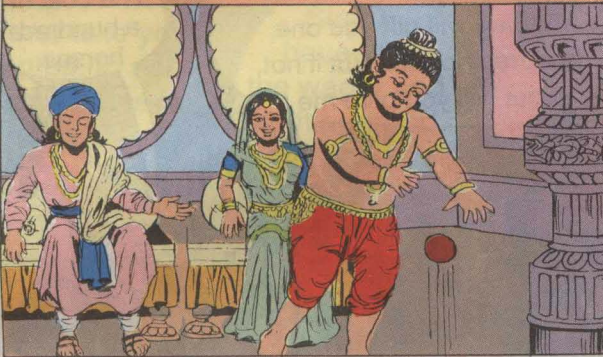
# Samprati





## Emperor Samprati

Now Kunal lived in Patliputra with his family. As time passed Samprati started growing.



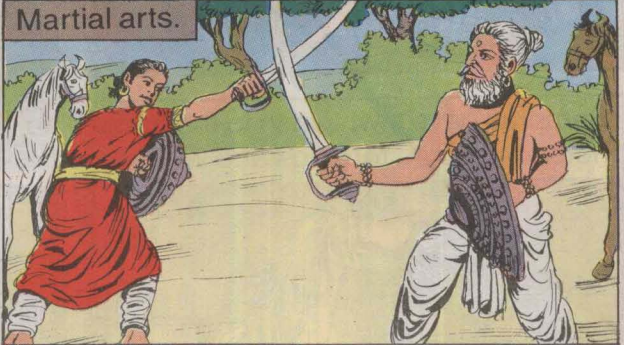
In due course the emperor arranged for his princely education and he studied with various teachers.



Education of politics.



Martial arts.



One day while prince Samprati was sitting in the assembly near the emperor a horse merchant came from Gandhar. He presented a magnificent horse to the emperor —

Sire! This is an excellent horse in all respect. The king who owns it will certainly become a Chakravarti Emperor.

But, Sire, it does not allow any one to ride it. Many great warriors found it difficult to control and ride.



The Emperor looked at Samprati —

What you say son! Do you like this horse ? Would you ride ?

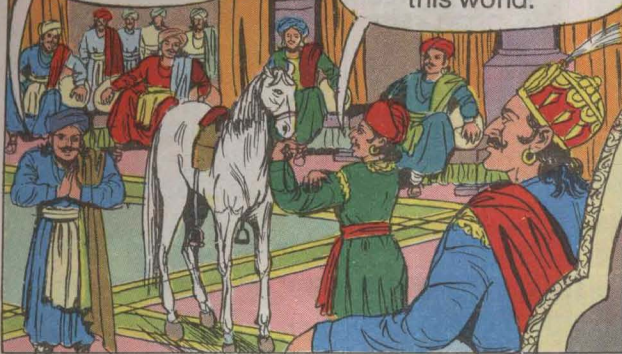
Sire! Playing with horses comes naturally to Kshatriyas. Please allow me.





Sire! The prince is still immature. To control this horse is not a joke.

Merchant! Forget it. These arms are strong enough to subdue all the powers in this world.



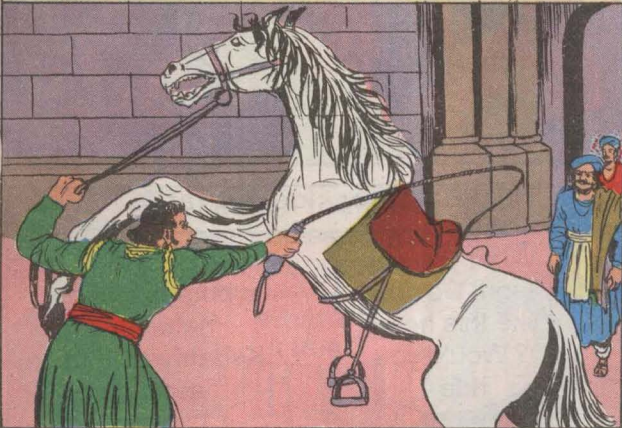
The merchant took it as a challenge --

If you are able to ride this horse I will gift you one hundred horses. But if not, what will you give me ?

The cost of a hundred horses.



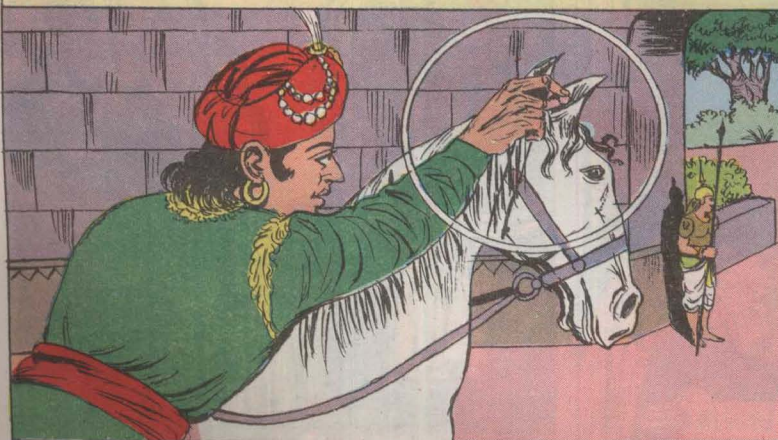
Samprati gave a whiplash to the horse. The horse raised its forelegs and whimpered.



Suddenly the prince jumped and took to the saddle. He tightened the reigns and the horse started trotting in circles.



The prince took out a pebble from his pocket and pressed it in the middle of the horse's ear-lobe. The horse calmed down.



Now the prince kicked the horse and it galloped.





After one hour the prince returned and brought the horse near the merchant —

Here, take your horse. To ride such horse is a child's play.

Sire! I have lost the wager and I gift hundred horses to you.



The Emperor embraced Samprati —

Son! your brilliance, valour and bravery will certainly make you an emperor one day.



One day Ashoka the great was sitting in his palace with his family. He said to Kunal —

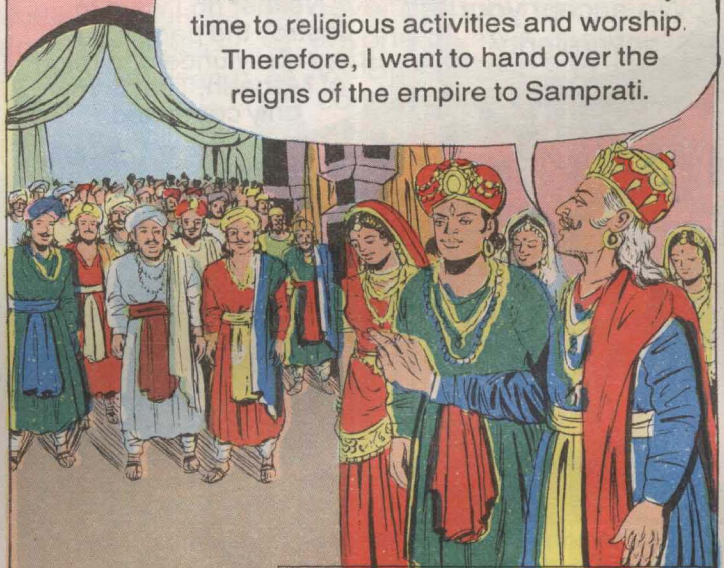
Son! Now Samprati has become a mature young man. There are numerous proposals for his marriage. Make arrangements for his marriage.

As you say, father.



Samprati was married to many princesses. At the time of the marriage ceremony the emperor made an announcement —

Now I am old. It is time to devote my time to religious activities and worship. Therefore, I want to hand over the reigns of the empire to Samprati.



Thus along with the marriage ceremony the coronation of Samprati also took place.



Not much time passed before Emperor Ashoka died. The state of Magadh was in mourning for some time. When Samprati could compose himself he thought —

I should expand my empire.



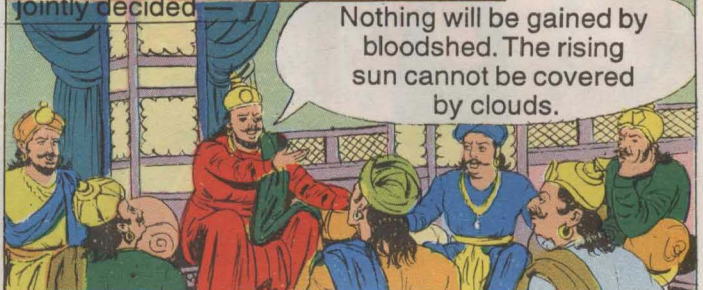
With a large army he launched his mission of conquering Kashi, Kaushal, and other states.

When he arrived near Kashi the spies informed the king of Kashi —



Emperor Samprati is a great and accomplished warrior. He has an invincible army. To fight a war with him is to embrace destruction.

The kings of Kashi and other states jointly decided —

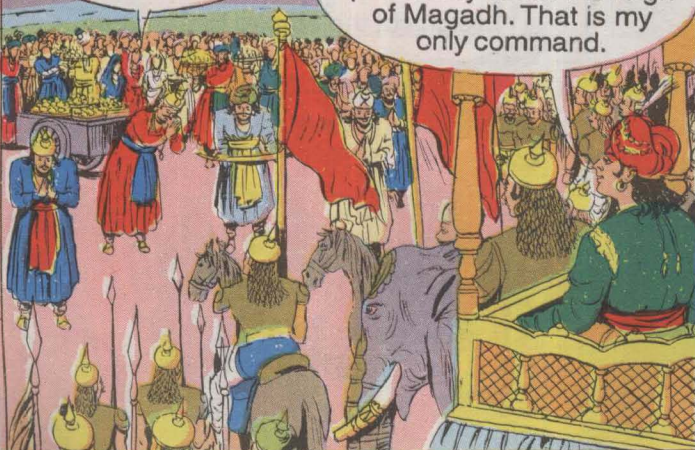


Nothing will be gained by bloodshed. The rising sun cannot be covered by clouds.

These kings welcomed Samprati and offered him rich gifts and their daughters in marriage. Samprati accepted the gifts in goodwill —

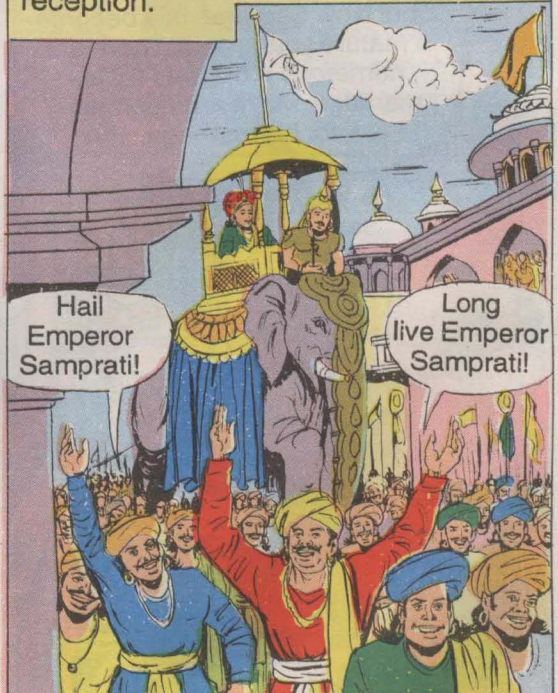
We accept your sovereignty.

I don't require your riches. Neither do I want to destroy the people. Live peacefully under the reign of Magadh. That is my only command.



After annexing Kashi and other eastern states, Samprati marched to the west and conquered Malava, Gujarat, Saurashtra, and many other states. He spread the Magadh empire far and wide.

After this conquest Emperor Samprati came to Avanti. He was given a grand reception.



Hail Emperor Samprati!

Long live Emperor Samprati!



The Emperor went straight to the palace and touched the feet of his parents. The mother admired the glory of her son with astonishment. Her eyes were brimming with tears and her voice was choked. Samprati said —

Mother! See the glory of your son. All these thousands of kings and princes, the great empire of the whole Aryavarta (India) is now at your feet.

For a few moments Sharatshri was bedazzled but then suddenly became serious. Samprati inquired—

Mother ! Are you not happy seeing the glory of your son ?

Son ! It is not that. Which mother will not be happy to see her son conquering the world. But. . .

But what, mother ? Have I missed something ?

Son ! After fighting many wars and killing thousands of people what did you gain ?

The empire of the whole Aryavarta, Mother ! An empire larger than those of my grandfather and his ancestors. Is there still something left ?

Son ! An empire gained through violence has never brought happiness to anyone. Even A chakravarti like Brahmaddatt and a great conqueror like Ajatashatru Kunik left their empires and were born in hell.



Hearing these words from his mother Samprati became serious. The mother added—

Son ! I am not disappointed to see your flag furling on half the continent. But neither am I happy.

Mother ! Then tell me how can I please you ? I will do what brings happiness to you.

If you want to know about the path of happiness and bliss ask Arya Suhasti. He is coming to this city tomorrow.

Alright, mother, I will do as you say.

All night Samprati contemplated —

Tomorrow Arya Suhasti will come and I will ask him how to please mother. I will also seek the path of my own bliss.

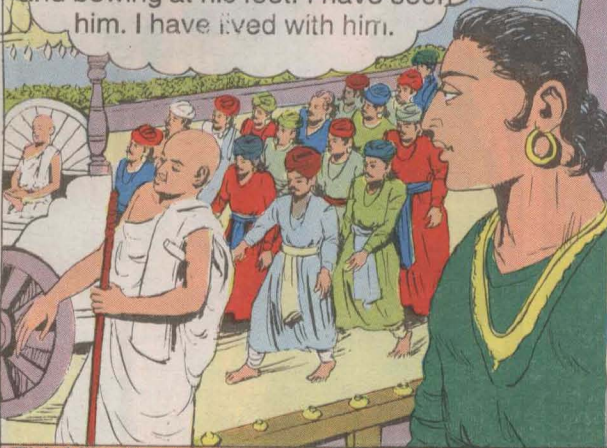
In the morning the emperor was walking on the rooftop. He saw a large procession on the road approaching. Numerous bands and drums were being played. Following these were merchants and dignitaries, young and old, and then thousands of women singing and dancing. In the middle was a large silver chariot with the image of Jivanta Swami. Behind these came an impressive, radiant, and divinely saint dressed in white followed by hundreds of Shramans and Shramanis.





From the rooftop the emperor watched all this. Suddenly he looked at the elderly and impressive saint. He carefully observed his face —

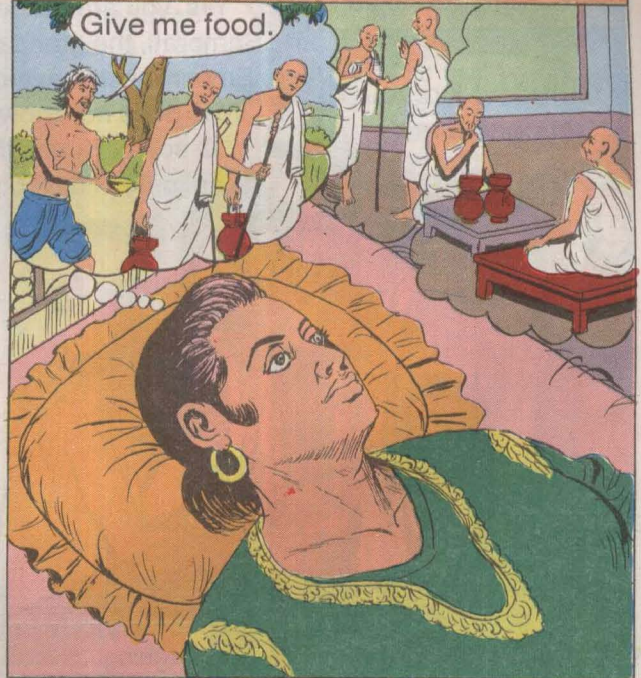
I seem to know this extremely serene great person. I have seen him somewhere? Why a mere glance at him fills me with such affection? I feel like going to him and bowing at his feet. I have seen him. I have lived with him.



Thinking thus the emperor became unconscious and fell.

His attendants carried him to his bed, sprinkled some water on his face, and fanned. When he regained consciousness some scenes emerged in his memory —

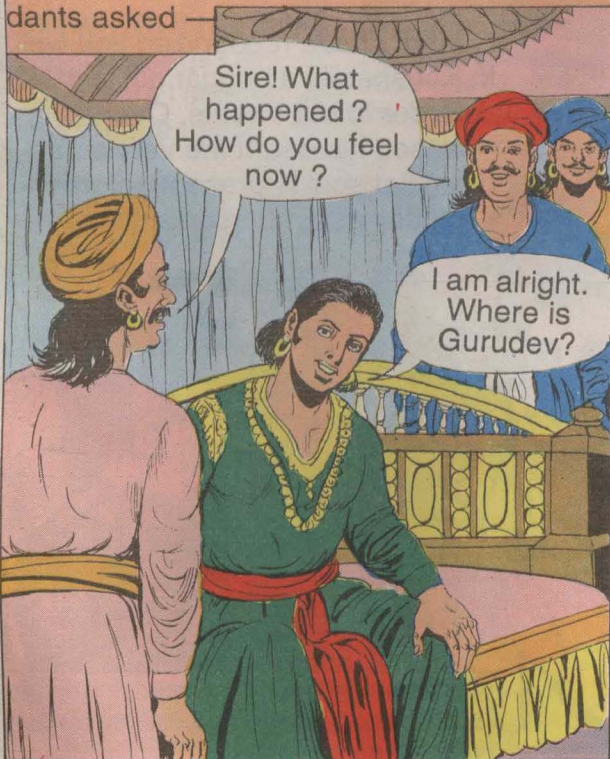
Give me food.



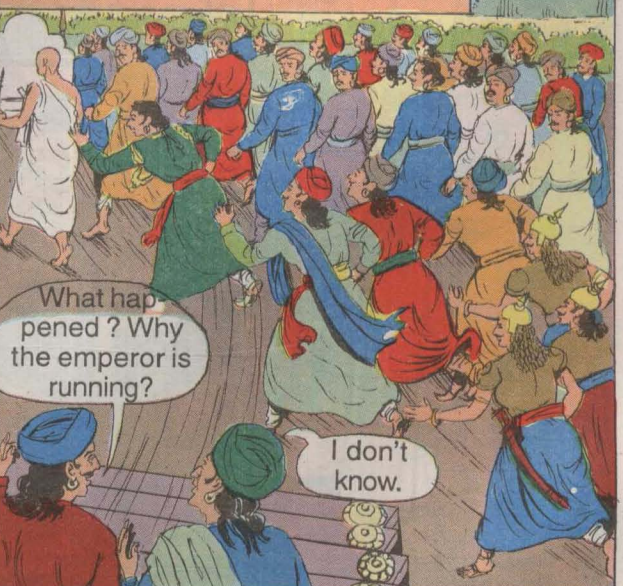
He sat up and looked around. The attendants asked —

Sire! What happened? How do you feel now?

I am alright. Where is Gurudev?



With these words Samprati rushed down from the palace and ran after the procession. His guards and ministers followed him. They said to each other —



Without any further question they also ran after the emperor.



When the people saw the emperor running barefoot they gave him way. Samprati arrived before Arya Suhasti. Going around him three times he paid homage to the ascetic. Acharyashri looked at him in surprise. With joined palms Samprati asked —

Gurudev! Do you recognize me?

Yes, you are Emperor Samprati, the grand son of Emperor Ashokavardhan. Who does not know you O son of Kunal, the epitome of devotion.

Acharyashri said laughing.

Not that. Gurudev, tell me my true identity.

For a few moments Acharyashri stared at him.

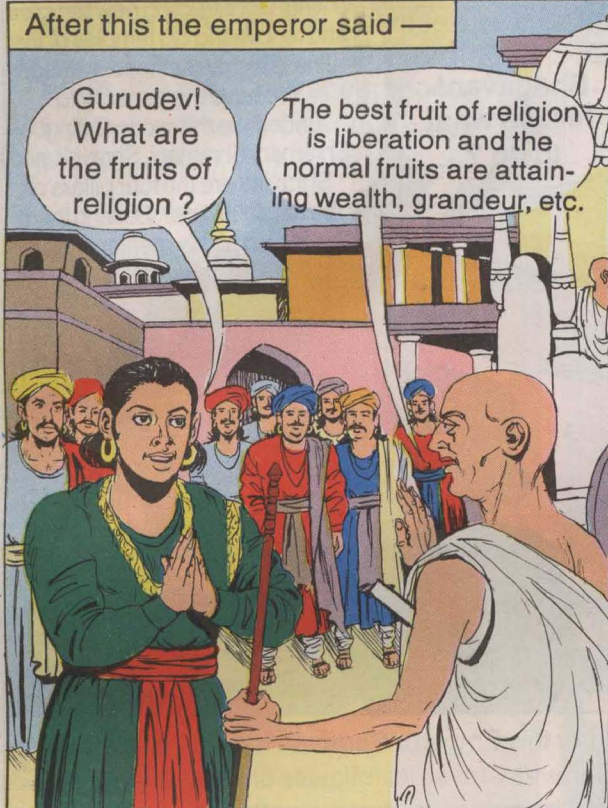
Then he smiled and said —

O king! I have recognized you well. In Kaushambi a beggar got initiated in order to eat sweets. Overeating caused his death the very same day. That soul is present before me today as Emperor Samprati.

On hearing about the emperor's earlier birth those present there looked at each other in astonishment.



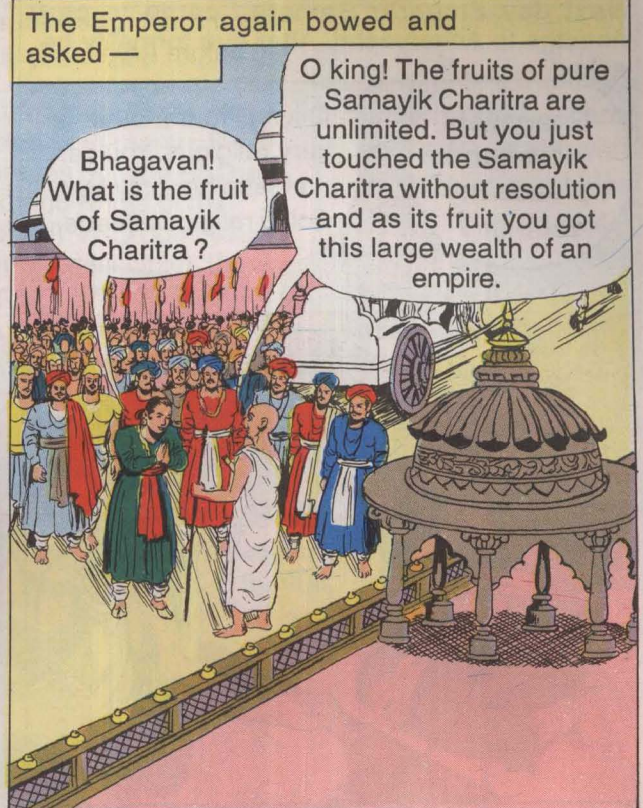
After this the emperor said —



Gurudev!  
What are  
the fruits of  
religion?

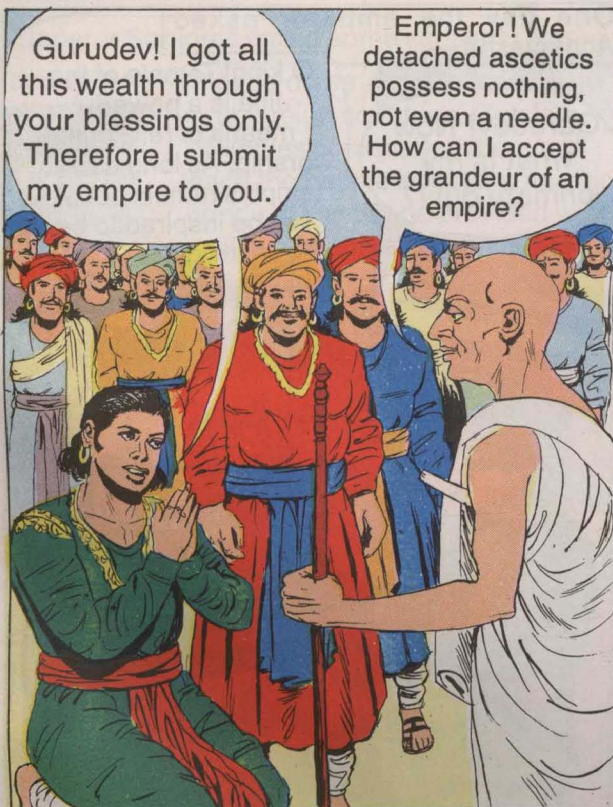
The best fruit of religion  
is liberation and the  
normal fruits are attain-  
ing wealth, grandeur, etc.

The Emperor again bowed and  
asked —



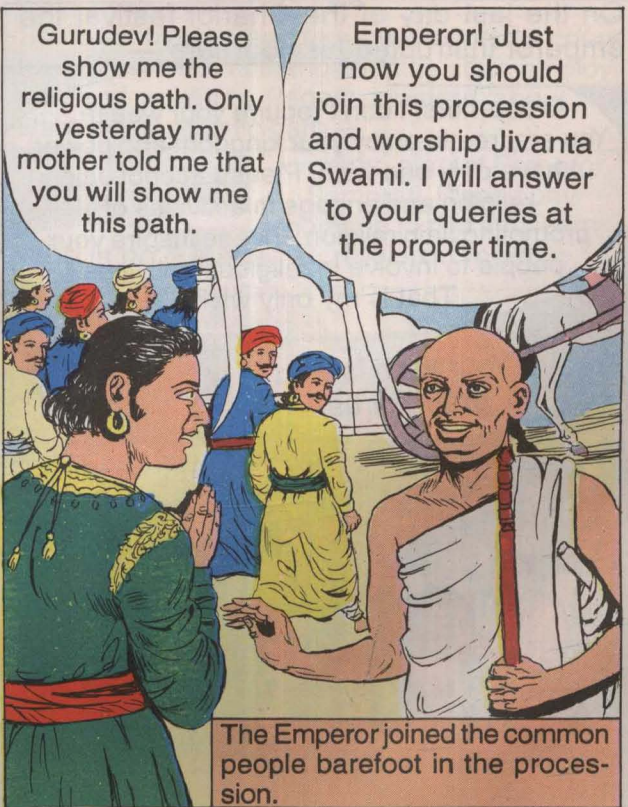
Bhagavan!  
What is the fruit  
of Samayik  
Charitra?

O king! The fruits of pure  
Samayik Charitra are  
unlimited. But you just  
touched the Samayik  
Charitra without resolution  
and as its fruit you got  
this large wealth of an  
empire.



Gurudev! I got all  
this wealth through  
your blessings only.  
Therefore I submit  
my empire to you.

Emperor! We  
detached ascetics  
possess nothing,  
not even a needle.  
How can I accept  
the grandeur of an  
empire?



Gurudev! Please  
show me the  
religious path. Only  
yesterday my  
mother told me that  
you will show me  
this path.

Emperor! Just  
now you should  
join this procession  
and worship Jivanta  
Swami. I will answer  
to your queries at  
the proper time.

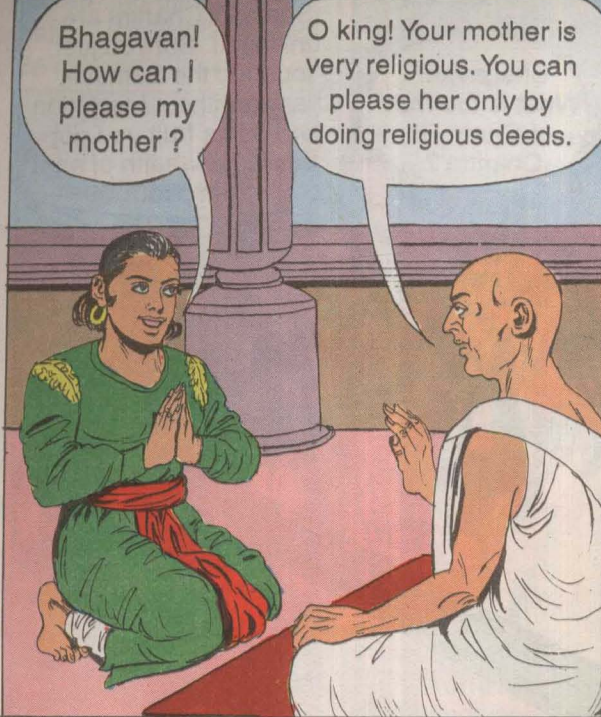
The Emperor joined the common  
people barefoot in the proces-  
sion.



Next day Emperor Samprati came to pay homage to Acharyashri. After due formality he asked —

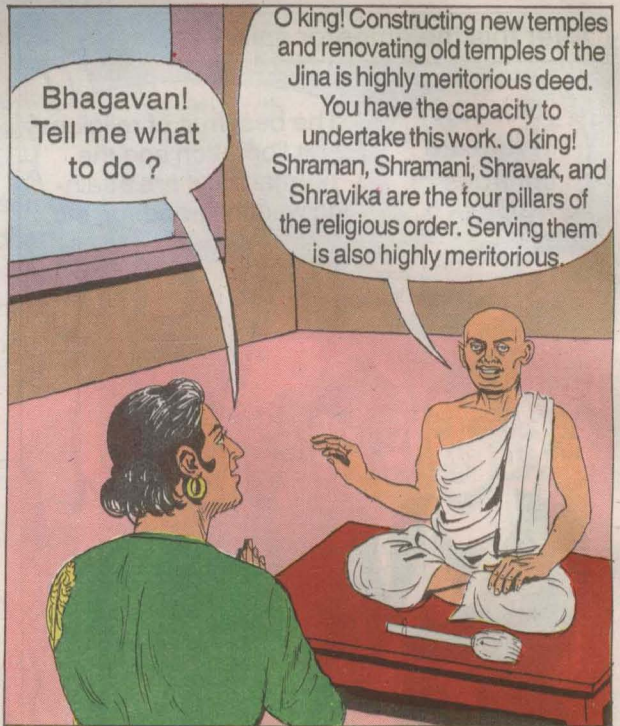
Bhagavan!  
How can I  
please my  
mother?

O king! Your mother is  
very religious. You can  
please her only by  
doing religious deeds.



Bhagavan!  
Tell me what  
to do?

O king! Constructing new temples  
and renovating old temples of the  
Jina is highly meritorious deed.  
You have the capacity to  
undertake this work. O king!  
Shraman, Shramani, Shravak, and  
Shravika are the four pillars of  
the religious order. Serving them  
is also highly meritorious.

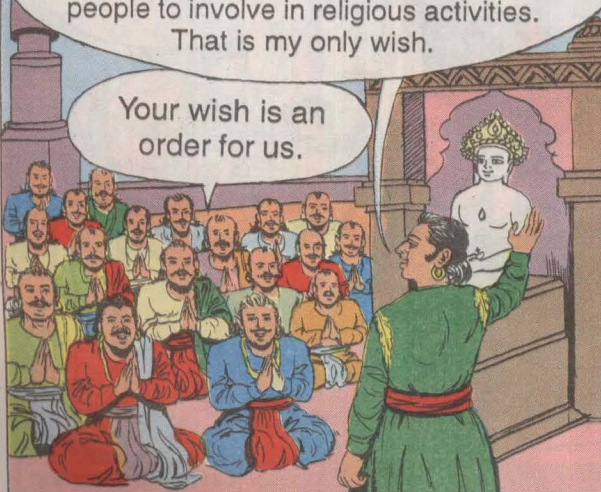


After this Emperor Samprati turned into a staunch Shravak and strict follower of shravak-vows.

On the last day of the Chariot festival the emperor instructed his courtiers —

O courtiers! I don't require your wealth.  
You are free to enjoy your kingdom and power.  
I have only one wish. Please accept Jain  
religion and engage in activities of  
promoting Jain religion. Please inspire your  
people to involve in religious activities.  
That is my only wish.

Your wish is an  
order for us.

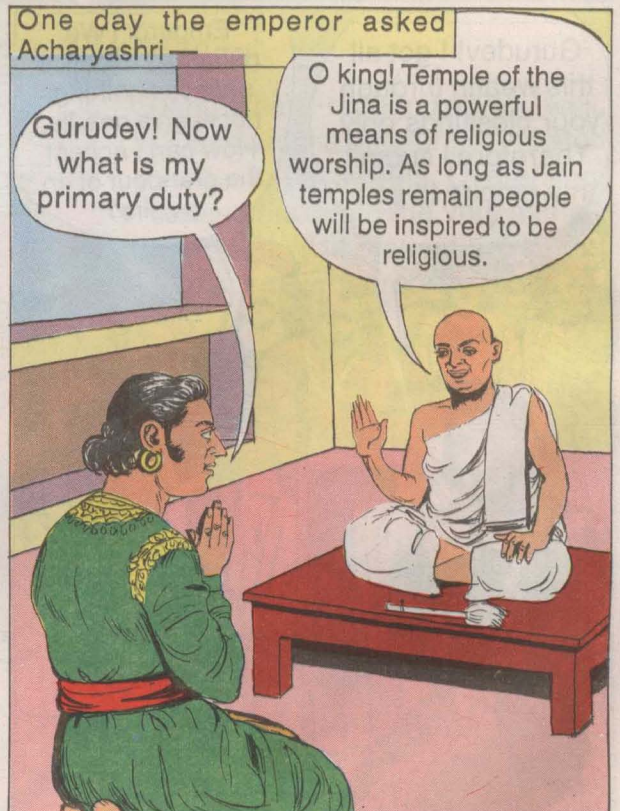


All the courtiers present there became followers of Jainism.

One day the emperor asked Acharyashri —

Gurudev! Now  
what is my  
primary duty?

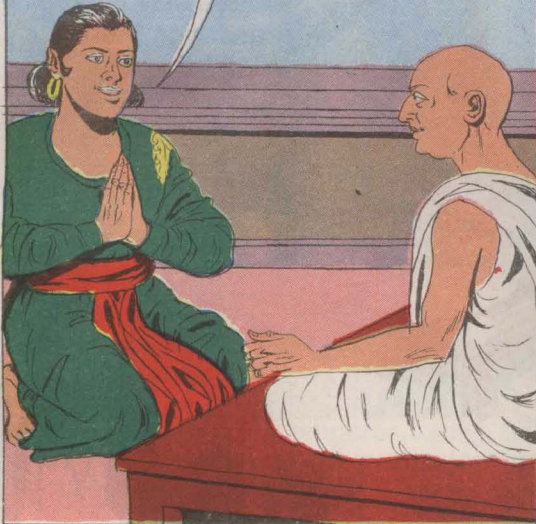
O king! Temple of the  
Jina is a powerful  
means of religious  
worship. As long as Jain  
temples remain people  
will be inspired to be  
religious.





In presence of Acharyashri Samprati took a resolve —

From this day I will accept food or drink only after I get the news of construction or renovation of a temple every morning.



One morning the emperor came to pay homage to Acharyashri and requested —

Gurudev! My empire extends to many other countries outside Bharatkhand (India of that period). Why don't you send your disciples there for promotion of religion?

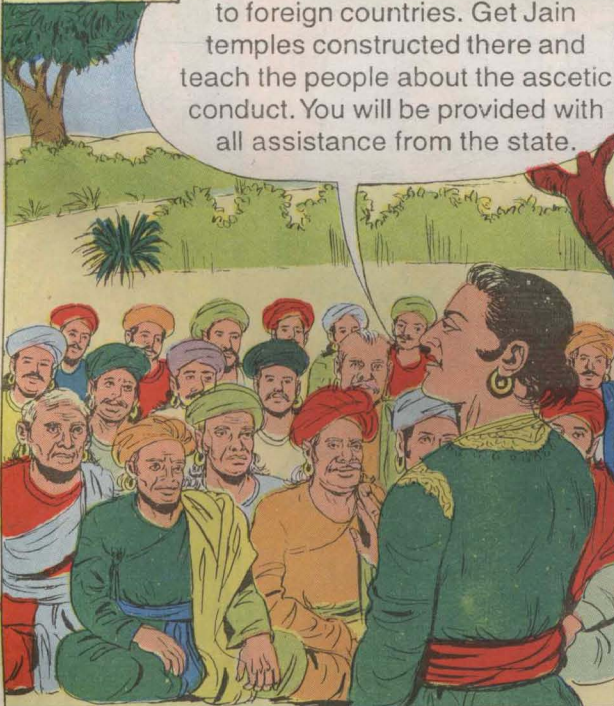
King! The people of those countries are not conversant with ascetic ways. How can ascetics get faultless food as alms there?

I will make necessary arrangements for that.



Emperor Samprati called some scholarly elders and said —

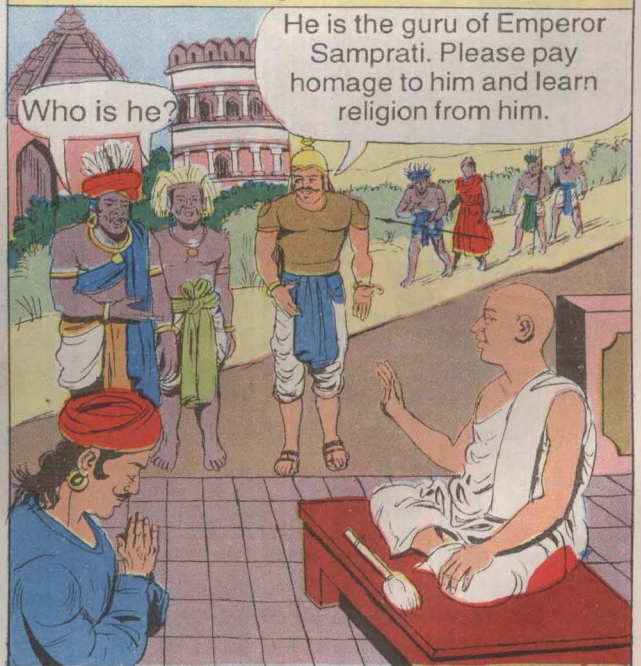
Please dress as ascetics and go to foreign countries. Get Jain temples constructed there and teach the people about the ascetic conduct. You will be provided with all assistance from the state.



Some scholarly preachers went to foreign countries. They were accompanied by state employees and soldiers. People inquired about the shravaks in ascetic garb —

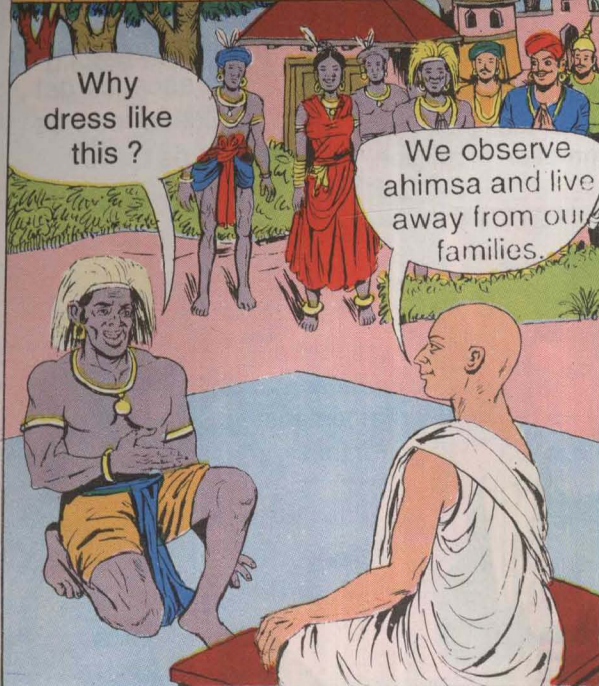
He is the guru of Emperor Samprati. Please pay homage to him and learn religion from him.

Who is he?

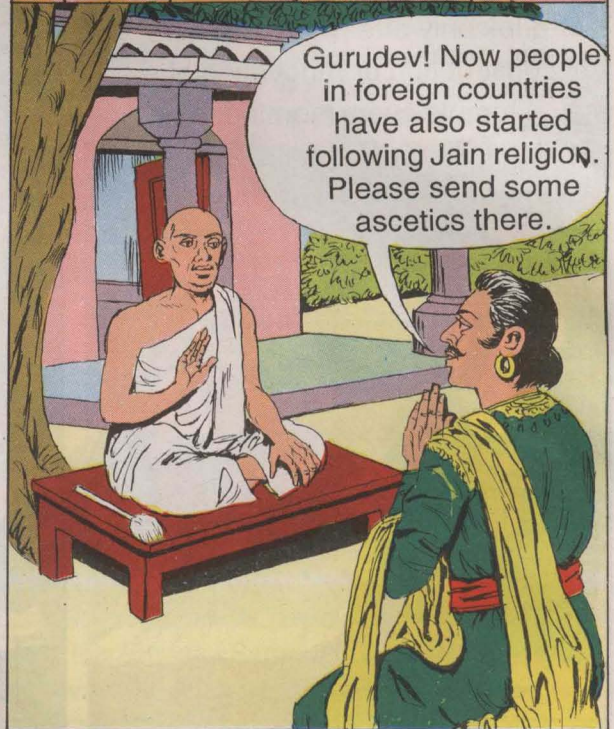




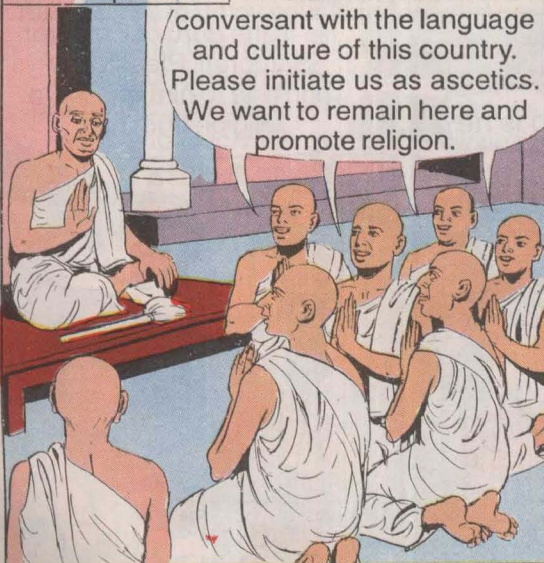
Taking them to be the guru of the emperor people visited these apparent ascetic. The scholars explained them about the ascetic ways and discipline.



The spies of Emperor Samprati brought him news from these foreign lands. One day the emperor requested Arya Suhasti —



Acharyashri sent some selected Shramans to countries including Persia and Greece. The shravak preachers who were already there requested —



The visiting Shramans found them qualified and initiated them. Thus promotional work on Jainism started in far away countries. Thousands of people embraced Jainism.

Once on a Paryushan day the emperor witnessed a scene and memories from his earlier birth surfaced.





The thought of the agony of a man dying with hunger made the emperor shiver. He called his officers and gave instructions

Outside all the four gates of the city construct large eating houses. No destitute, suffering and invalid should sleep hungry.

On the dictate of the emperor eating houses were opened. Everyday thousands of poor people got free food.

Acharyashri once said to the emperor —

In absence of knowledge religion cannot last long. Therefore people should be educated.

Following the advise of Acharyashri Samprati issued orders

In all cities of the empire schools should be opened. Free education should be provided to children and youth all.

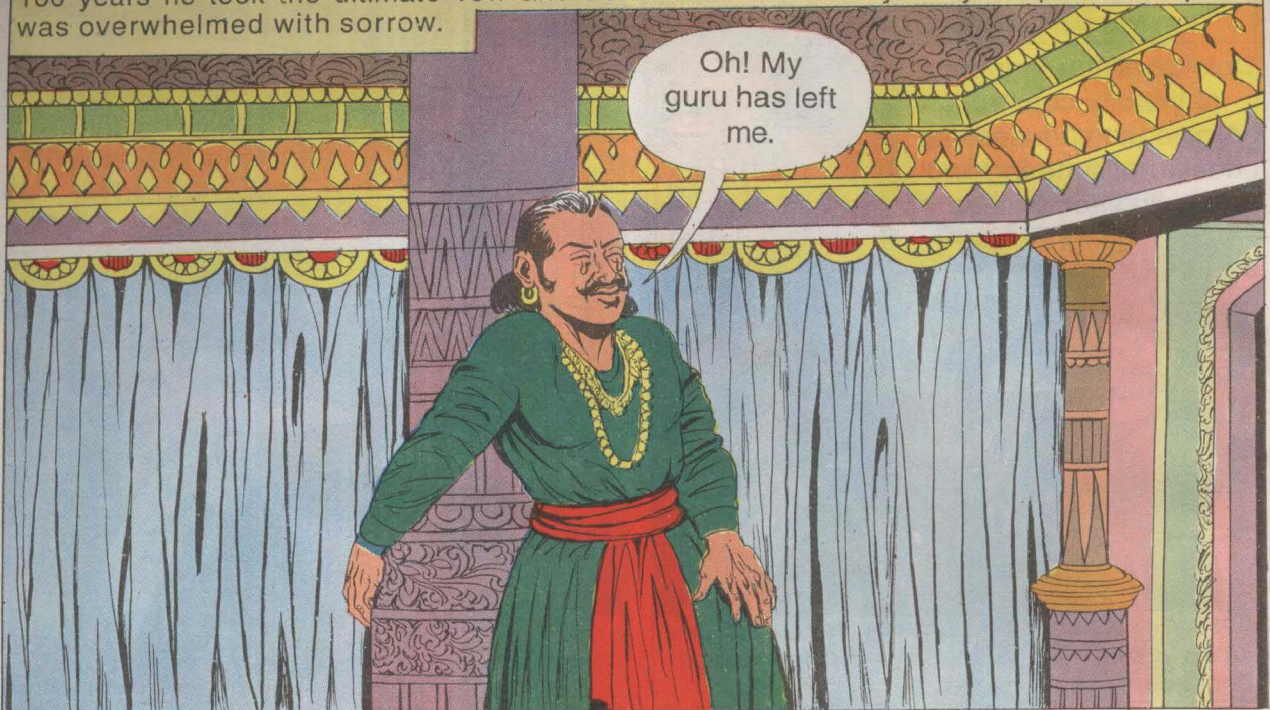
Thus Emperor Samprati earned great meritorious karmas by spending unlimited wealth on meritorious deeds of public welfare, such as construction of Jain temples, promotion of religion and education, and clemency for all beings.



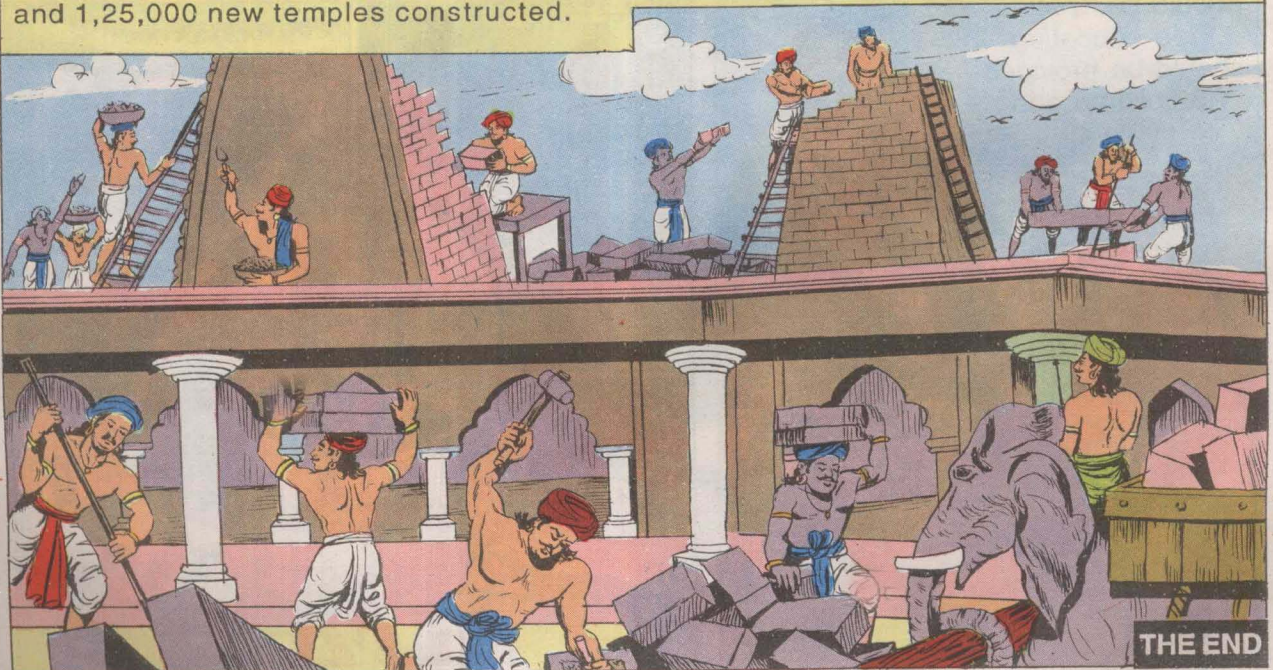


## Emperor Samprati

After 267 years of the nirvana of Bhagavan Mahavir, Arya Suhasti handed over the reigns of the religious order to two of his able disciples Sushthit and Supratibaddh. At the age of 100 years he took the ultimate vow and abandoned his earthly body. Emperor Samprati was overwhelmed with sorrow.



It is said that Emperor Samprati got installed approximately 12.5 million Jina images made of brass, copper, gold, etc. Images installed by Samprati are found even today at Nadol, Shatrunjaya, Giranar, Ratlam, and many other places. In his unprecedented mission of promotion of religion he got 6,600 ancient temples renovated and 1,25,000 new temples constructed.





# HAPPINESS IS WITHIN REACH

*Dear friends,*

Today mankind is living in an interesting time, when the science of information and technology is rapidly taking over and practically governing his life. The cave man has become a castle man. The days of cartwheels and carriages are being replaced by Cadillacs and convertibles. The period of stone grinding and grating have become obsolete and the modern electric grinders and graters are taking their place. The old is being replaced by the new with tremendous speed and have placed mankind on the verge of a new threshold.

As the machine is used for instant work, in the same way man works for instant happiness, fame and riches. He does not care whether it is at the cost of environmental pollution, depletion of the natural resources or animal abuse and suffering. He is under the powerful grip of greed and acts under the intoxication of modernization, leading him to self-destruction. Motivated by ego and sensuality, he uses all of his skills in the acquisition of worldly pleasures and in hedonism. In this way the gift of technology and information make the rich richer and the poor poorer. It is this self-centeredness of mankind that has inspired Havelock Ellis to say, "The sun, the moon and the stars would have disappeared long ago, had they happened to be within reach of predatory human hands." Such is the man of today who is destroying mother Earth and thereby his own species for the sake of his material gratification.

In this way, when we look around us, all we see is that man has become a burden and an enemy to himself and the mother earth, rather than a friend to all. Engaging himself in anger, lust, selfishness, deceit and competition he ultimately paves the way to violence and war. As Thomas Merton has rightly said, "Violence can begin only where thought and rational communication have broken down."

Living with this pace and in this space, man has become mechanical and a robot. He now has no mind of his own and works like a machine. Society thinks for him and he obeys its orders. His herd mentality blinds his vision and goads him to move about without any direction. One wonders whether he has

the same element which is potentially capable of becoming Mahavir, Buddha, Ram or Jesus-epitomes of love, compassion and simplicity ? How can he become attain anything, if he does not take charge of his own life and discern the difference between right and wrong in the light of the truth ?

History tells us that no amount of wealth and fame has made mankind happy in the past, nor will it make him happy in the future. For material happiness is fleeting and temporary. It's definition changes with man's desires and dreams. Happiness does not lie in accumulation of things, but in the art of equal distribution, simplicity and contentment.

In this New Year let us decide not to become a machine in the mechanical world, acting without thought, but instead think before each action. For every positive or negative action has an equal and opposite reaction. A loving thought cast in the universe has a loving response and an evil thought has an evil one. It is the law of the nature that what is thrown out in the universe comes about like a boomerang. So why not prioritize our life on the basis of our needs and comfort and not on our greed and luxury. In this way we can eliminate the possibility of acquiring negative vibrations and unwanted karmas and channelize our thoughts, words and actions in the positive direction, starting the millennium with a new beginning and reshaping our life again.

In the Western terms we are entering a new millennium and in that sense the whole world is excited about the advent of it. Though you and we know however that civilization is a lot older than that. Is it the dictionary meaning that makes it so important or the hope of global peace, happiness and order that it may bring for all, that makes it important ? Let us see how the dictionary defines it. It says that it is "a period of thousand years. A period of general righteousness and happiness especially in the indefinite period." But where is that period of righteousness and happiness ? Where is the peace ? What was wrong yesterday that we are dreaming of tomorrow ? Why are we not happy today ? These are questions that come to one's mind.



It is needless to say that the answers to these questions are different for different class of people. There are two classes of people who think in two different ways. There is one class that asks every morning "what should I do to become hungry ? (Kya kare to bhuk lage ?) and there is another class that asks "what should I do when I become hungry ? (Bhuk lage to kya kare ?). In any given situation neither one seems to be happy. So where is the happiness ? More than 80% of mankind toils for food, shelter and protection and yet many of them go to bed hungry. There is another small percent that is affluent and simply wallows in luxury. What a disparity in the lives of the two ! One has plenty and the other is empty.

Those whose conscience is still alive and awake are compassionate and say, how can we be happy when the world is full of misery, pain, and suffering ? How can we be happy when there is so much stress, tension and chaotic disorder ? Animals suffer from human abuse and torture. Children suffer from mal-nutrition and child abuse. The poor from poverty and hunger. The rich suffer from desire, greed and disease, and the rest of the world suffer from dehumanizing war and violence. Where is the happiness that we are looking for ? Is it in the material gain that the modern world is throwing at us, or is it in the wiping of the tears of the suffering and the aching ? We are all pretending that we are happy, but are we really ? Or are we living under an anesthesia that has numbed us towards the pain of others ? I think there is a corner in every heart that hurts and cries, but very few have time and understanding to listen to that inner voice. It is time to pause for a moment and reflect back on our past, so that we may change our future.

To get a fresh outlook to life, one must turn towards the philosophy of Jainism as practiced and propounded by Lord Mahavir. It has profound answers to our questions. It is founded on the law of reverence for all life (Ahinsa), relativity in thinking (Syadavada), law of cause and effect (theory of Karmas), law of non-acquisition (Aparigraha), and law

of compassion (Karuna) through non-violence in thoughts, words and action which is its basic tenets. It has also emphasized the idea of tolerance and non-interference as its teachings. These perennial principles of Lord Mahavir are the avenues to health, healing, harmony, peace and love. They were useful thousands of years ago and will be useful for many millennia to come. In this way, putting the teachings of Jainism into practice one can renew one's connectivity to that ancient source of teaching and live in harmony with oneself and in harmony with the rest of the world.

In these trying times, the world is now looking for a happier, brighter future for living-beings. Let us therefore work collectively for the betterment of the whole universe by changing our focus from 'I' to 'We'. For if we keep doing what we are doing, we will keep getting what we are getting.

Someone has beautifully said that, "I expect to pass this world but once. Any good therefore that I can do, or any kindness that I can show to any fellow creature, let me do it now, for I shall not pass this way again."

The message of the new dawn is for all of us but youth in particular, who is the hope of tomorrow. They will help the way society thinks and feels. For, tomorrow belongs to the youth, youth that holds the promise of the future. They are the symbol of energy and zeal, openness and compassion, creativity and innovation. They have time and vigor to carry on and give life to the ancient heritage of reverence for life, understand and practice the wisdom of the seers and use the insights of the enlightened masters. They are the torch bearers and trend setters of peace, progress and prosperity for the present and future generation.

So let us all think globally and act locally, making a difference in every moment of the millennium and be aware of our glorious spiritual wealth by arising, awaking and work and not stopping until the goal is reached.

**Jai Jinendra**  
**Pramoda Chitrabhanu**



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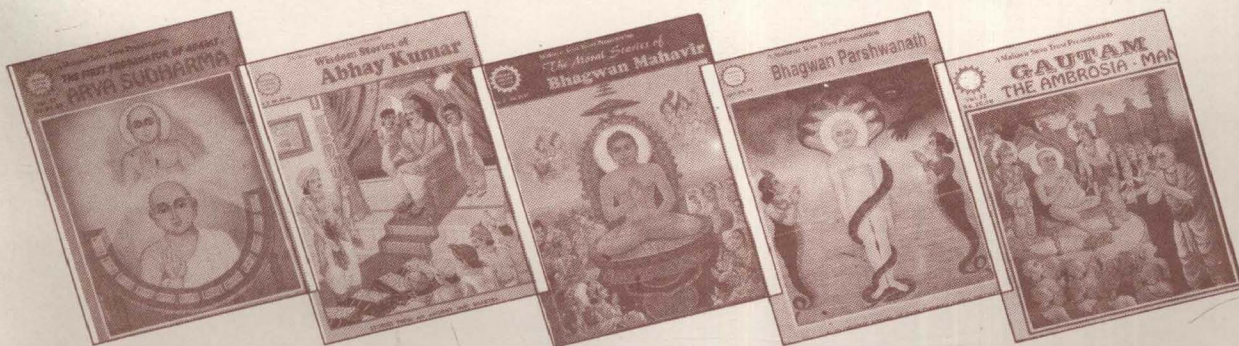
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# PRINCE VARDHAMANA WITH MEMBERS OF HIS FAMILY



**Vardhamana with the members of his family.  
It depicts an aspect of his domestic life.**